MSP-OR
Advancing Maritime Spatial Planning in Outermost Regions

ATLANTIC PROJECT AWARD

POLICY BRIEF

Main recommendations on Stakeholder Engagement, Social Impact Assessment, Ecosystem Services, and Emerging Sectors for an efficient and sustainable Maritime Spatial Planning in the Outermost Regions

December 2024

GA n. 101035822 – EMFF-MSP-2020

CORE CONCEPTS

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is an essential driver for navigating the intricate dynamics of marine space utilization. A strategic and cohesive approach addressing human activities in ocean environments has become imperative.

The **Outermost Regions (OR)** are an integral part of the European Union (EU), distinguished by their insularity, small size, complex topography and climate, remoteness, and economic dependence. There are nine ORs, that should apply the EU laws and obligations (Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The **Project MSP-OR – Advancing Maritime Spatial Planning in Outermost Regions** arises to support the implementation of MSP processes in the ORs of the Azores, Madeira (Portugal), the Canary Islands (Spain) and French Guiana (France), promoting an effective ocean governance.

EU MSP Directive (2014/89/UE) provides the legal framework for MSP in the EU and requires the 22 coastal Member States (MS) to produce MSP for the maritime water under their jurisdiction.

Azores
Madeira
Canary Islands
Saint-Martin
Guadeloupe
Martinique
French Guiana
Mayotte
Réunion

(Source: Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions - https://cp-rup.com/)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This **Policy Brief** aims to support the ORs in decision-making, government actions, and stakeholders' debates focused on MSP process.

The work is based on identifying **the main challenges** in specific aspects, finding possible solutions and routes of action, improving them and thus accomplishing effective **MSP processes**.

Stakeholder Engagement

Emerging Sectors

Social Impact Assessment

Ecosystem Services
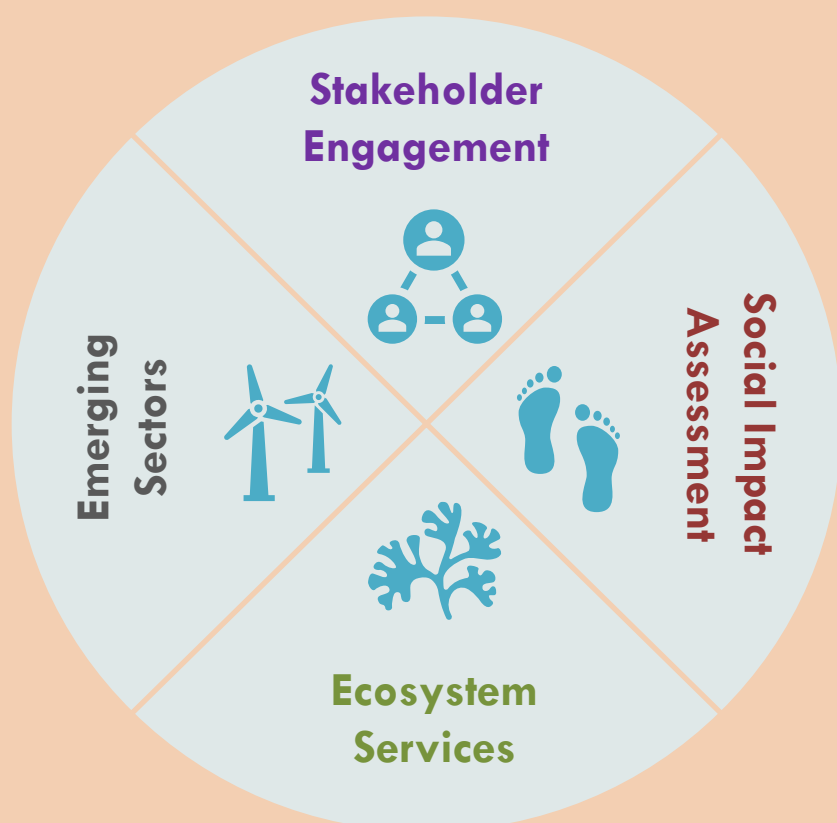
It summarizes the main ideas discussed under the MSP-OR Project and the results collected divided in two categories:
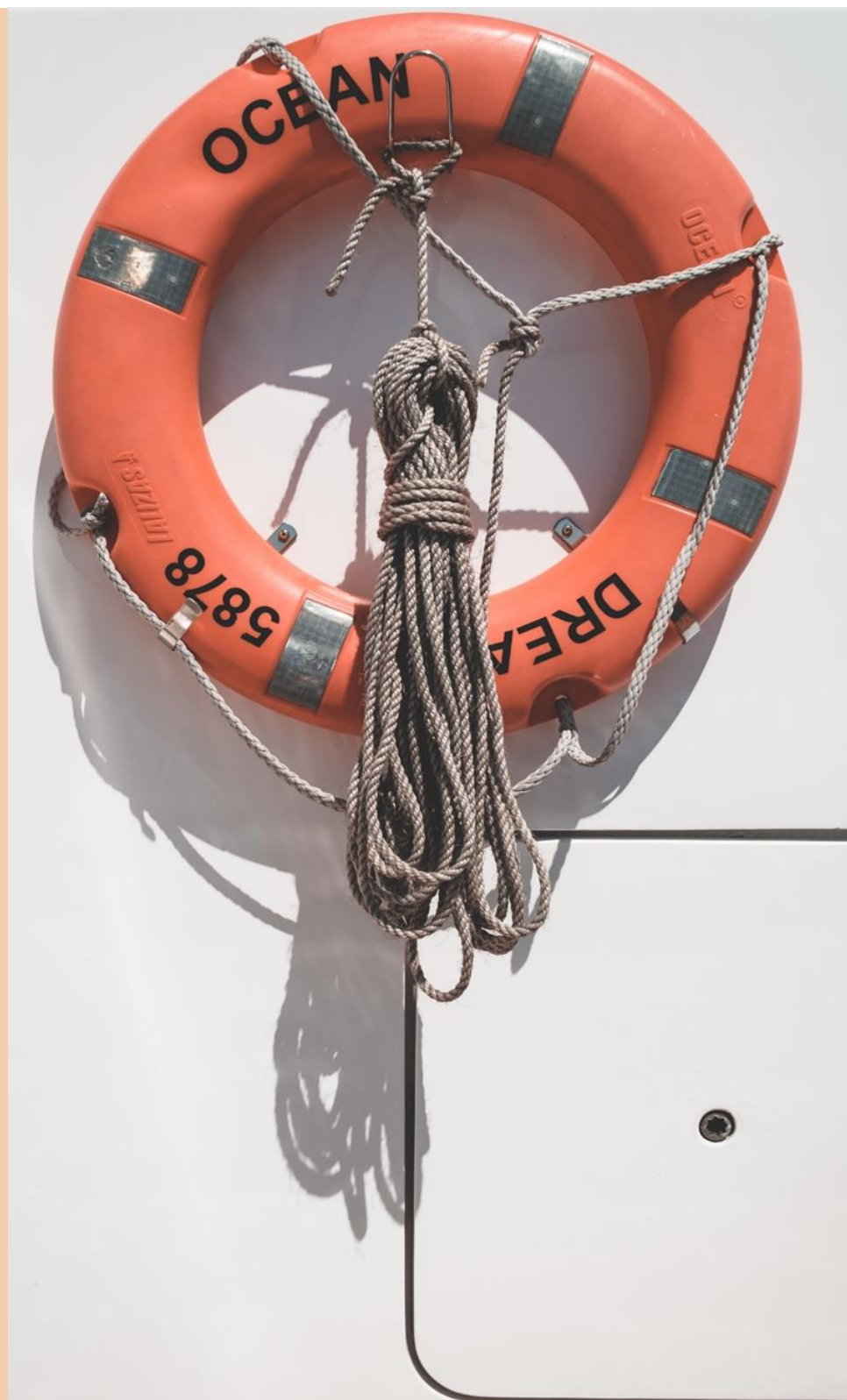
Key messages

Recommendations for action

They are adjustable to other ORs, can be **tailored to particular settings and pointed toward an adaptive MSP process.**

INTRODUCTION

This work is a product of the MSP-OR Project, developed through the challenges´ activities on the **OR´s Ocean Governance Hub.**

The **MSP-OR Platform** has emerged as a virtual arena for discussion, knowledge sharing and capacity building on the MSP between the ORs involved.

Platforms are essential tools to support ocean governance. They facilitate interaction, collaboration, and exchange of information among diverse stakeholders, including scientific communities, government bodies, NGOs, and the general public. They serve as meeting points to share ideas, research findings, and to collectively develop strategies to tackle ocean challenges. More than just information hubs, platforms catalyze innovation, driving the progress of ocean governance and encouraging collaborative efforts.

Check out the MSP-OR Platform!
www.platform-msp-or.eu

MSP-OR PLATFORM

The MSP-OR Platform has functional spaces that allow data to be consulted and stored, knowledge and practices to be exchanged, and materials to be disseminated.

These spaces (rooms) foster collaborative and participatory work and support the involvement of stakeholders in framing the ORs' MSP processes and ocean governance.
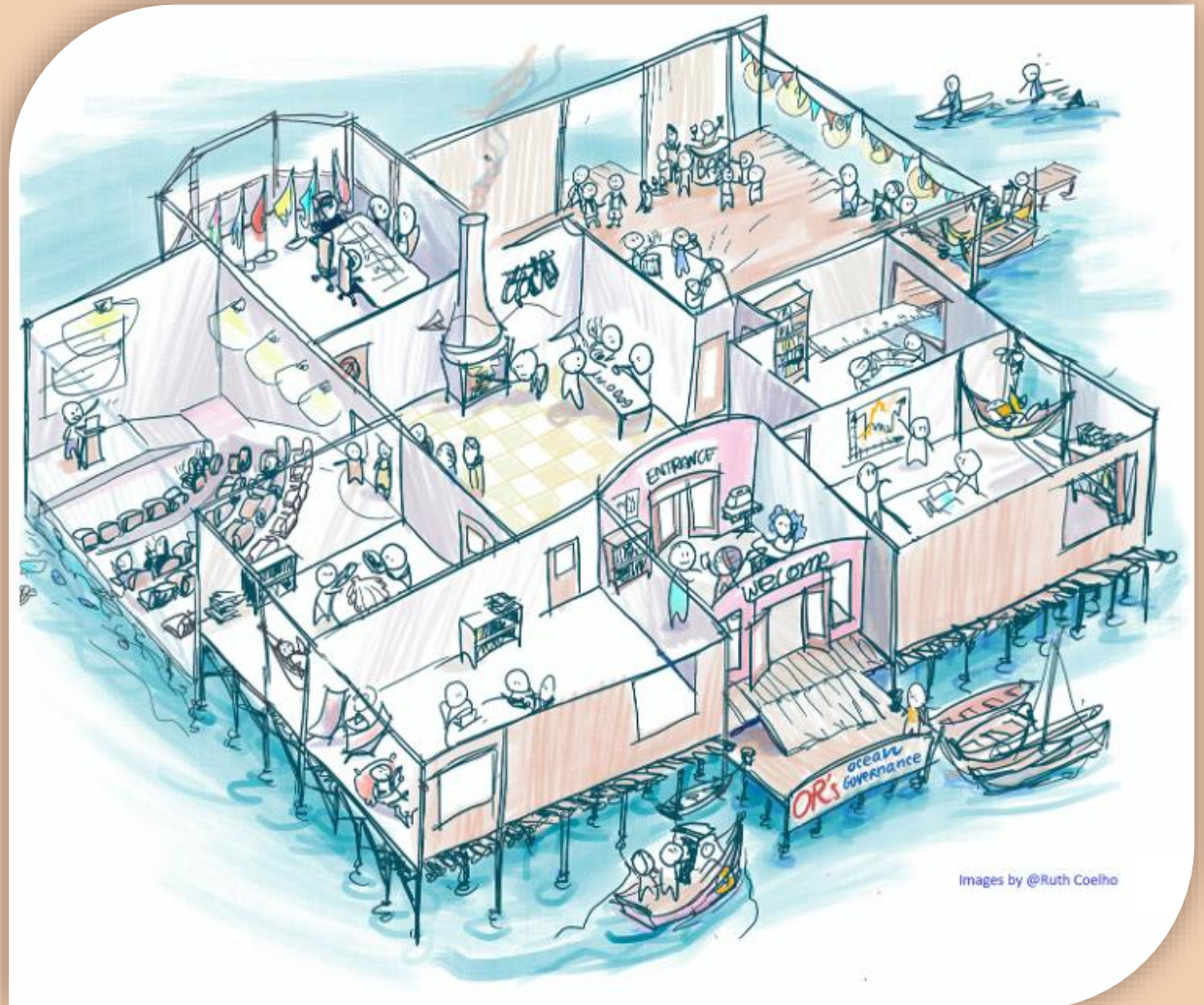
Understanding the Platform FLOW

Four **Working Groups (WG)** coexist on the Platform:

Data Knowledge (DK)

Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM)

Filling the Gaps (FG)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Some of the **methodologies** used to build this Policy Brief were taken from the **Platform's tools**, such as webinars held at the **Chillout** area, online meetings/surveys organized by each WG Focal Point at the **Blog**, and upload of scientific papers and documents at the **Library**. The final reflection documents of each challenge are available at each WG **Shelf,** and and final consolidated versions were submitted to the Governamental Agencies for feedback, and uploaded to the public **Library.**
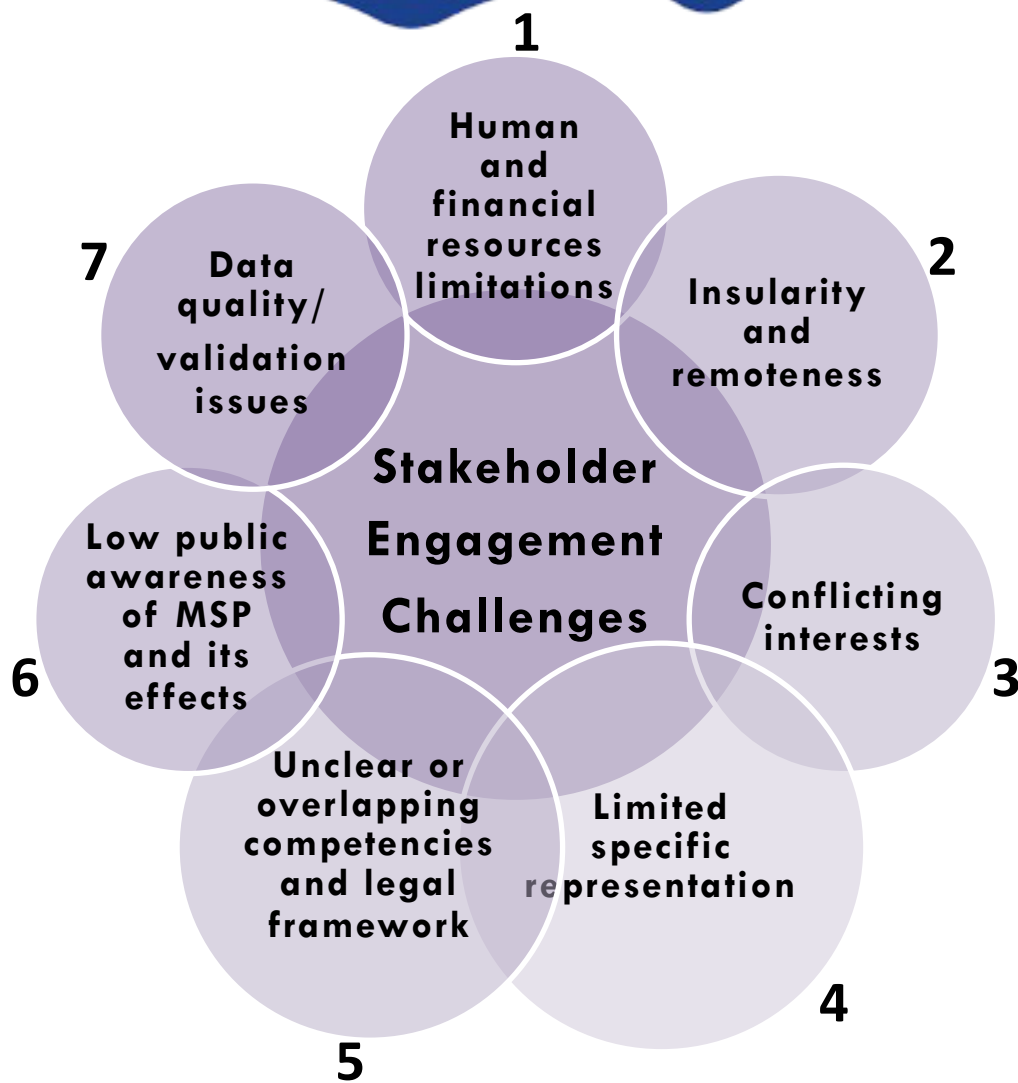
What specific features need to be highlighted in the context of Stakeholder Engagement in the ORs?

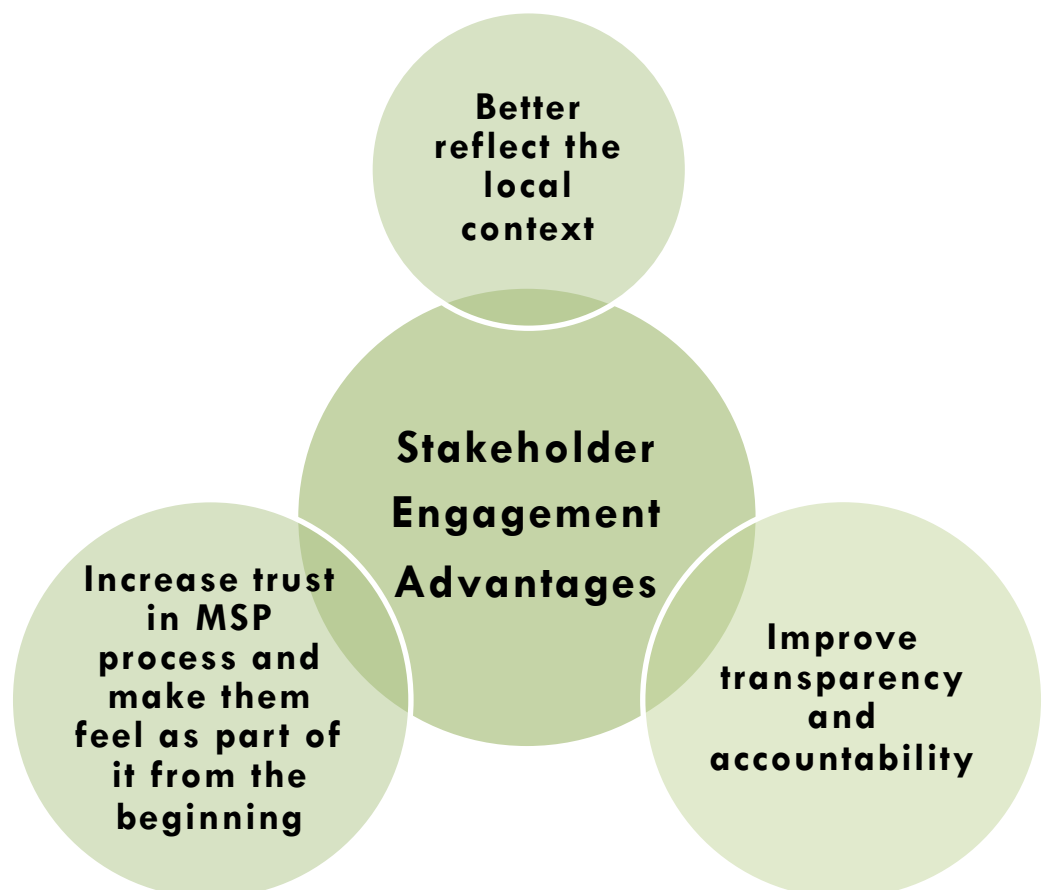**What data themes should be collected from stakeholders?**
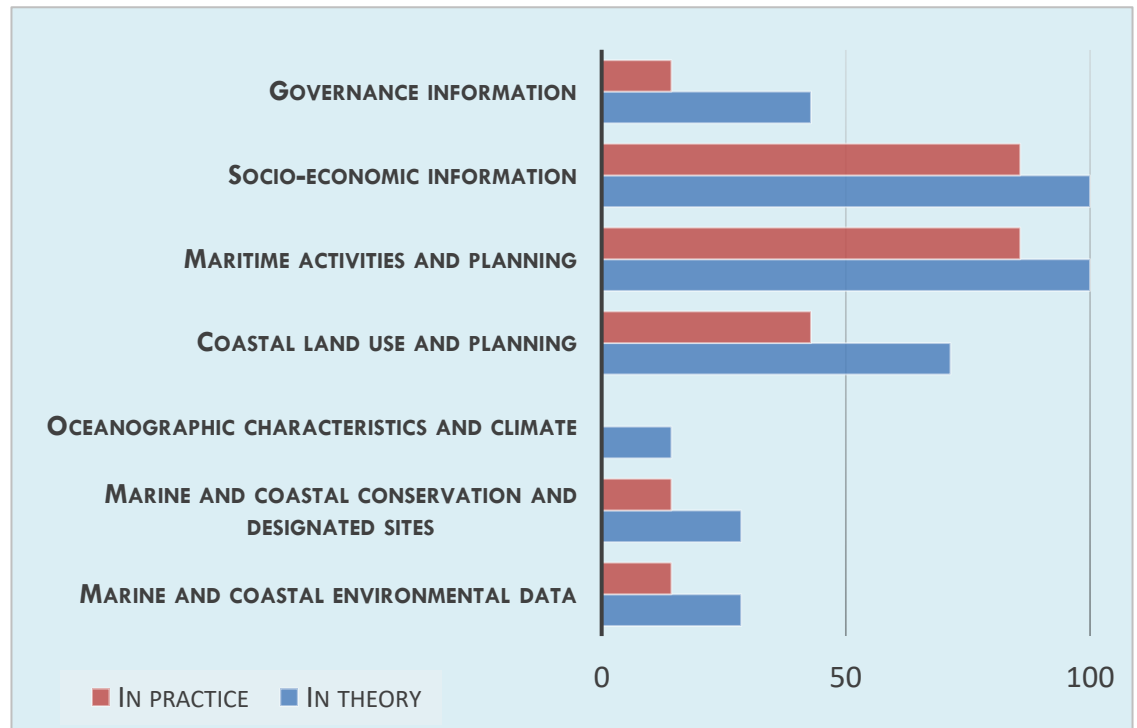
o **Data Knowledge improves the effectiveness of MSP and promotes its successful implementation** by analyzing existing and future conditions regarding spatial and temporal distribution of uses and activities; filling data gaps; identifying stakeholders' perspectives and priorities, needs and expectations; anticipating potential conflicts; and assessing impacts of the plan.

o **The quality of relevant MSP analysis** to the allocation of maritime activities can be appropriately improved by including stakeholder considerations in MSP evaluation and revision process.

o The knowledge of a complex and dynamic system such as the ocean, combined with the legal framework, constitute a **particular challenge in the ORs.**

o **Economic, social and environmental power balance** needs to be considered.

o **Stakeholders have different objectives and interests,** that can be difficult to align with the EBM goals.

Stakeholder Engagement Challenges

1. Human and financial resources limitations
2. Insularity and remoteness
3. Conflicting interests
4. Limited specific representation
5. Unclear or overlapping competencies and legal framework
6. Low public awareness of MSP and its effects
7. Data quality/validation issues

o **Managing stakeholders expectations should be a continuous work,** starting from the inception of the MSP and going into its implementation and evaluation.

o **Developing a shared vision and communicating the long-term benefits** helps to guarantee long-term stakeholder support.

o Stakeholder engagement **within Monitoring and Evaluation is a pivotal aspect of the MSP** cycle.

o **Government interest and commitment are crucial** for successful MSP outcomes.

o The **methodologies for engagement depend** on the objectives and targets of the ORs actions.

o **Engaging stakeholders** involves collecting input to identify any missing information, improving awareness, understanding, and acceptance of MSP and its outcomes, reducing conflicts, enhancing **decision-making and the planning & management effectiveness** in MSP.

o **Ecosystem-based management is not a consensual topic** and deals with complex and crosscutting concepts, so it's challenging to explain it to the stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement Advantages

- Better reflect the local context
- Increase trust in MSP process and make them feel as part of it from the beginning
- Improve transparency and accountability

1. Building Trust and Collaboration with Stakeholders:
- Involve stakeholders in the entire MSP process
- Ensure that different levels of stakeholders are well-represented from the beginning
- Plan stakeholder engagement actions carefully and provide feedback

2. Effective Communication and Transparency:
- Use online exchanges and digital tools to overcome remoteness and insularity
- Foster awareness, education, and capacity building
- Implement good practices, involve communication professionals, manage expectations, and maintain periodic communication

3. Capitalize Building and Policy Implementation:
- Support translating EU Directives into practice
- Develop a plan to explain the concept of EBM and its importance
- Gather data and inputs from stakeholders for MSP Monitoring & Evaluation
- Publish the MSP plans on the EMODnet platform for public access

~Key Messages~

How to approach Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in the ORs?

~ Understanding social impacts helps to inform decisions that aim to avoid, mitigate, or reduce adverse effects and enhance the benefits of MSP ~

1 Decision-making often ignores qualitative data explaining social factors, focusing on monetary terms for cost-benefit analysis due to funding allocation.

2 Social legitimacy is crucial for MSP goals due to fear of unequal distribution of costs and benefits and conflicting community needs.

3 Economic and social data are closely linked but higher economic development doesn't always mean better social welfare.

4 Social scientists' involvement is crucial in enhancing the integration of MSP by raising awareness, conducting decision-making, and Social Impact Assessment with marine planners and stakeholders.

5 The effort and resources dedicated into SIA must be proportionate to likely social impacts and risks.
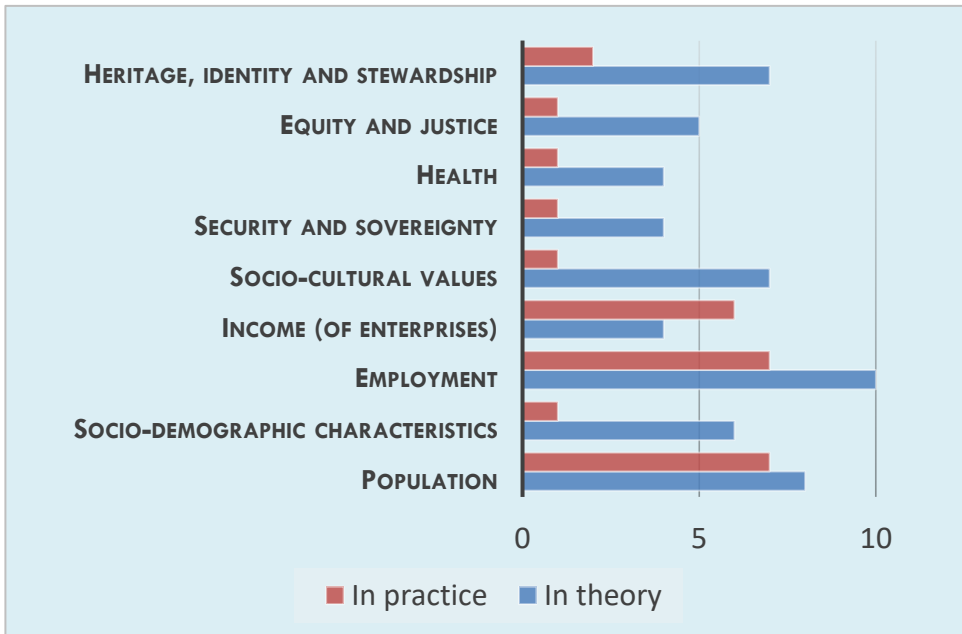
6 Social Impact Assessment and Ecosystem-Based Management can be linked by recognizing that a healthy ecosystem is essential for the social and economic sustainability of a society.
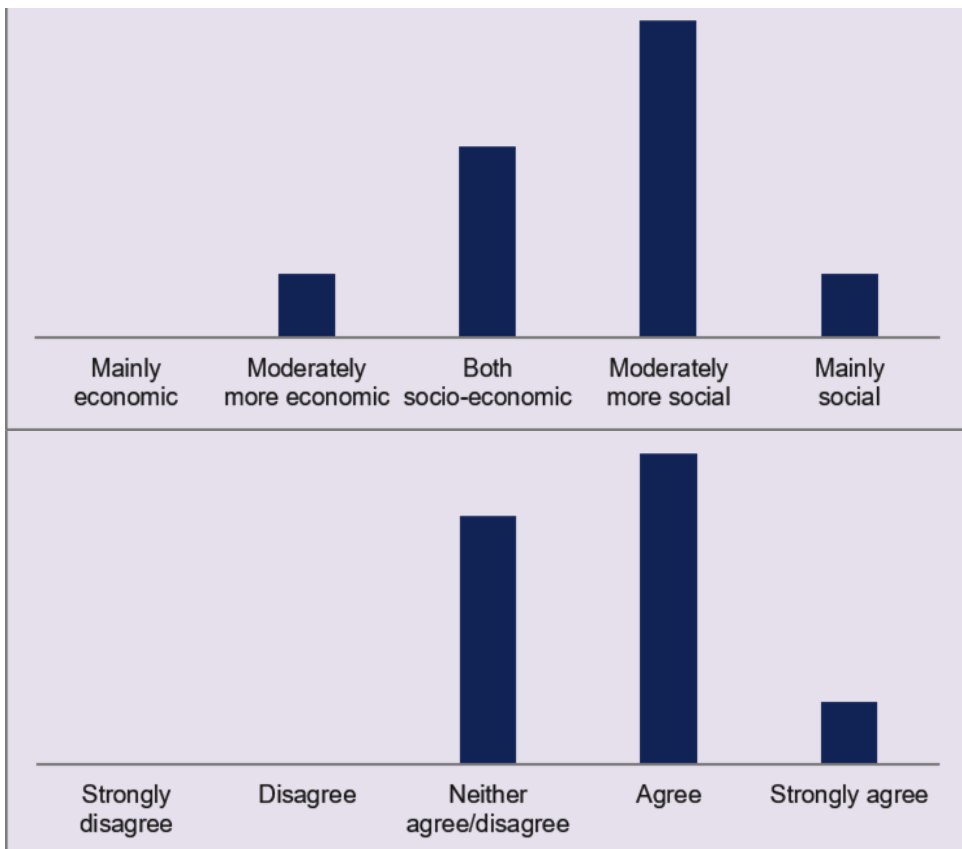
7 If a new activity is to be implemented in one area, it is necessary to carry out a Social Impact Assessment on the other activities present in that area.

What general type of data and information should be considered within SIA for MSP?

Horizontal bar chart with categories (top to bottom):
- Heritage, identity and stewardship
- Equity and justice
- Health
- Security and sovereignty
- Socio-cultural values
- Income (of enterprises)
- Employment
- Socio-demographic characteristics
- Population

X-axis: 0, 5, 10

Legend: ■ In practice ■ In theory

What type of data should mainly be used in SIA?

Bar chart categories:
Mainly economic | Moderately more economic | Both socio-economic | Moderately more social | Mainly social

Bar chart categories:
Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree/disagree | Agree | Strongly agree

"Social data must be clearly distinguished from economic data"

WHAT IS MISSING:

- Within MSP, social data is often overlooked and subordinate to fostering the **blue economy**. Social aspects revolve around minimizing and avoiding conflicts among different actors to promote the compatibility between maritime uses and activities.

- Social values tied to cultural heritage can be challenging to measure, yet it is essential to evaluate how MSPlans measures impact social and economic aspects via ecosystem services.
- A framework is needed to carry out SIA, which should consider the ORs specificities. The uncertainty linked to the collection of social data makes it challenging to use existing approaches.

~Recommendations~

Social Impact Assessment can be...	It requires...
a tool to support management ensuring that the benefits of MSP are maximized and the negative impacts are avoided or minimized on an ongoing basis.	the clarification of responsibilities and roles of all involved.
supported by meaningful and transparent stakeholder/community engagement from the earliest stages of MSP to build trust and respect.	qualified professionals, facilitation, conflict resolution, qualitative research methods, and attention throughout the MSP process.
done in a retrospective context for the plan to detect and adapt to the changing social setting.	before an MSP plan is approved, the SIA and a management plan are implemented and integrated into the global M&E system to outline strategies for each MSP phase, effectively adapting to social changes.
a learning process where initial assumptions need to be modified in light of new data collection and analysis information.	to be an iterative process of revision and update by stakeholder engagement, acknowledging particularly impacted communities and indigenous/traditional people.
a process involving research and analysis to influence decision-making and manage social issues.	genuine community engagement through meaningful interaction and good-faith dialogue.

The support of social scientists can significantly improve the operationalization of social impact assessments within MSP processes. As good practice, it should define the type of social data needed from the outset.

The benefits for human well-being coming from the free usage of public littoral/maritime space could be monetized, and new social indicators are needed to better guide and evaluate the desired outcomes of MSP processes.

Social impacts of MSP should benefit from a specific and targeted assessment.

Local communities may perceive MSP as a threat to their livelihoods. It is key to recognize the sociocultural value of areas and their significance to local communities.

Developing a long-term monitoring plan: regular data collection and analysis provide insights into the effectiveness of strategies and support informed decisions for adaptive management.
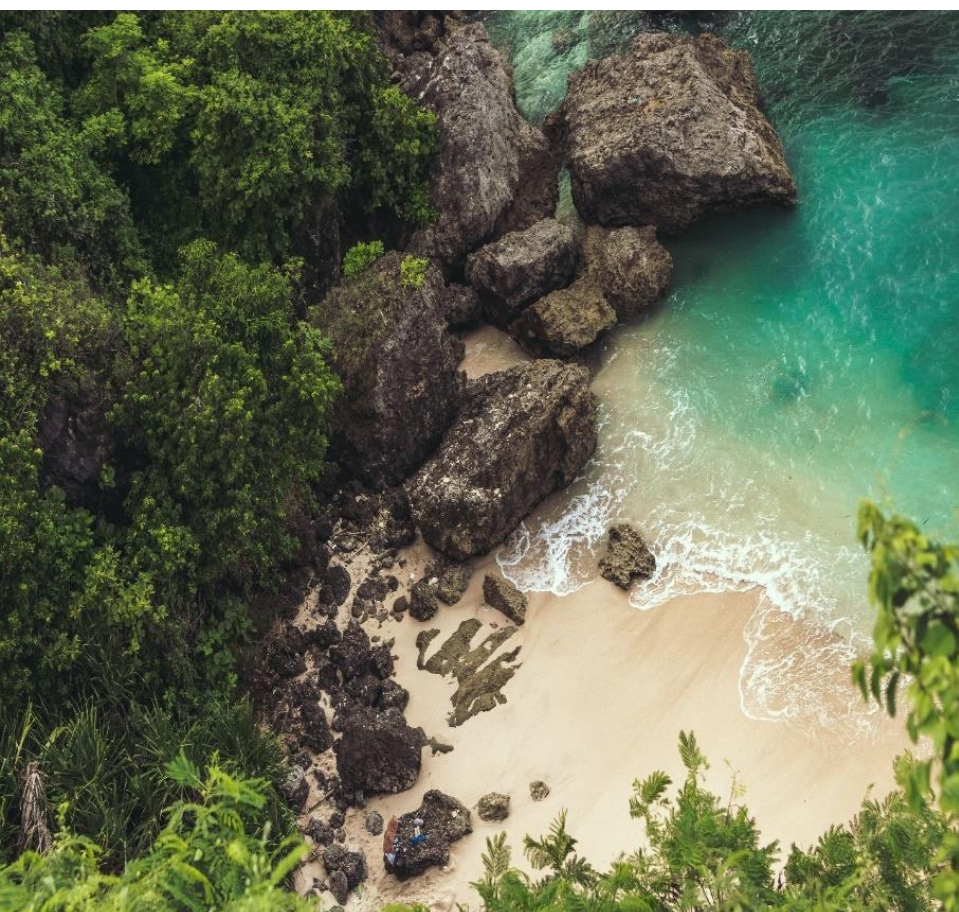
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in Outermost Regions

~Key Messages~

Use of Ecosystem Services in MSP, gaps, challenges, and possible recommendations

Ecosystem services (ES) may represent the **link between the MSFD** (EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive) **and the MSP** Directives In the ORs there is a **growing interest in understanding and quantifying** ecosystem services.

The ES analysis **involves several critical components**: identification; categorization of ecosystem services; stakeholder engagement; data collection and assessment; quantification and valuation; and integration into planning and policies.

Ecosystem services assessments are integrated within the main policies, as the MSFD and the MSP, but their full implementation remains challenging.

Some aspects related to ES require abundant and varied data types to understand and assess marine ES, can be:

MSP should ensure reasonable use of marine space to prevent the deterioration of the ecological components that underpin the provision of Ecosystem Services (ES).

ES acts as a perspective to assess the plan's impacts on nature and human well-being, thus allowing for a broader understanding of the human-nature relationship.

Besides, it **facilitates the interaction between science and policy** and can help to overcome communication gaps between scientists, policy-makers, and stakeholders, as well as across sectors and disciplines.

- **Biological,** as marine species, habitats and their role in ES supply;
- **Oceanographic and environmental,** as physical and chemical parameters and related human pressures;
- **Economic,** as socio-economic indicators regarding the blue economy sectors;
- **Social,** as cultural practices, attitudes and perceptions on the derived benefits of the well-being.

- Within the **context of M&E**, assessing ES can be a **pivotal method to evaluate MSP** from an anthropocentric perspective, by analyzing how it impacts the provisions of ES (including biotic, abiotic, and cultural services) based on the analysis of ecological, environmental, socio-economic, and human use data;
- The selection of **robust indicators for M&E of ES within MSP** is critical for understanding **sustainability** and informing **policy decisions**;
- ES assessment is a **critical step in the M&E phase**, as it provides policymakers with a framework for adapting to the changing environment and societal needs and informing tradeoffs of different conservation and development scenarios that may impact the marine environment and the services it provides.
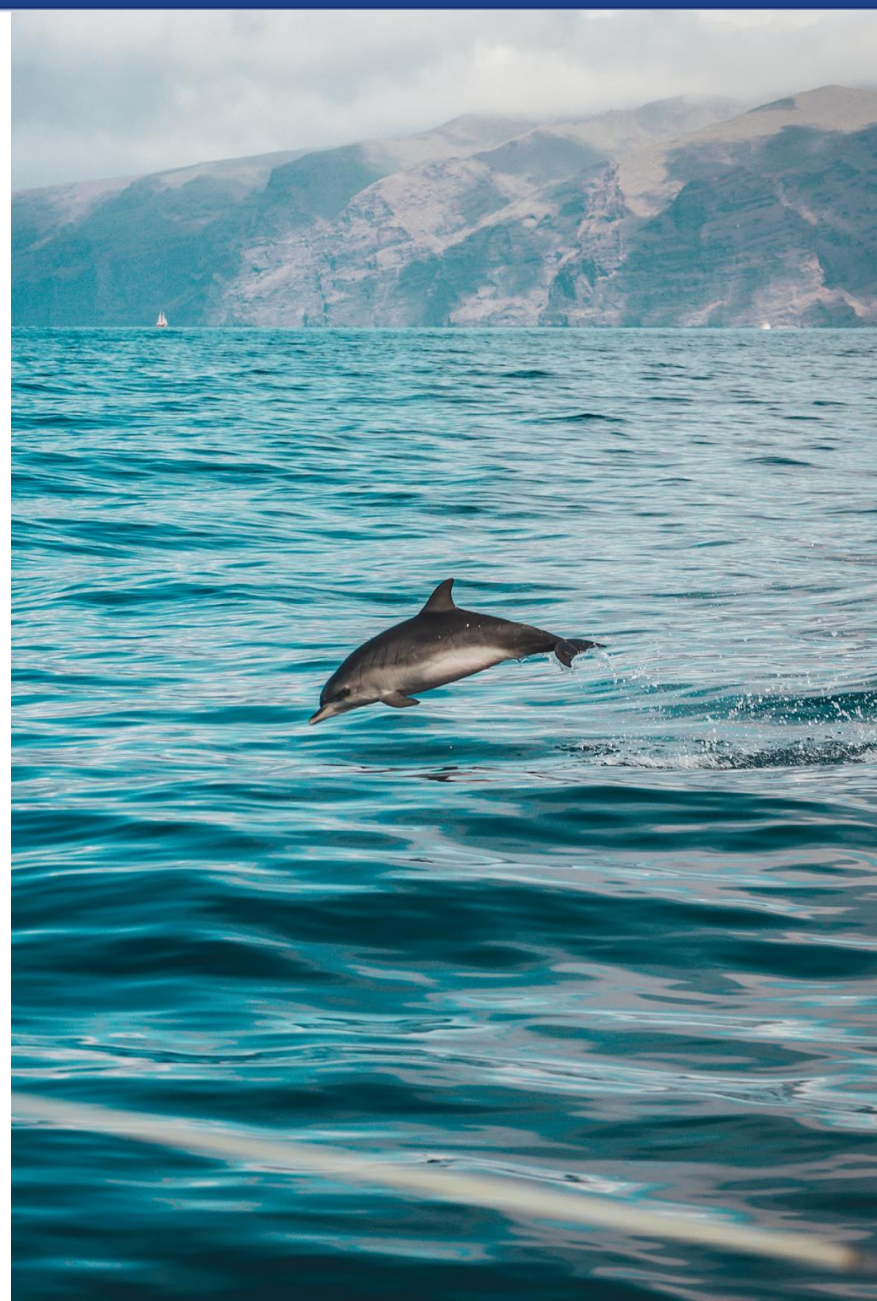
DETECTED ABSENCES:

- There is **no standard approach among the ORs** for evaluating or reporting ES;
- Most benefits for human well-being come from the free usage of public litoral and marine space, but they could be **better explained through monetization**;
- New approaches to analyzing qualitative data that effectively capture **social values**;
- In the ORs there is a lack of data and insufficient knowledge about ES, although studies and research are being carried out to improve more knowledge.

- Integrate ES assessment in MSP is essential for **sustainable management of marine areas.** It relies on understanding and valuing the benefits that ecosystem structure, function and processes provide to **human well-being**. This approach is key to **making informed decisions** and ensuring the **long-term health** of marine environments.
- ES assessments are essential for MSP to **effectively address climate change** impacts on marine ecosystems. By recognizing the importance of ecosystems in building **climate resilience** and integrating this into MSP plans, the regions can better prepare for and adjust to changing environmental conditions.

- Value ES in common metrics is challenging due to uncertainties, but failing to quantify these benefits can lead to **unsustainable decisions in marine resource management.** This can result in overexploitation of resources and unsatisfactory outcomes in the long term.
- Improve clarification of the methodologies for operationalizing ES assessments within MSP is crucial to ensure that decision-making leads to more **balanced and sustainable outcomes**. The use of indicators for provisioning services can be limiting, such as quantifying the cultural and regulation maintenance services provided by oceans and their intrinsic role in climate regulation, carbon sequestration, and water purification, poses a significant **challenge.**

- **Anticipate future scenarios** is vital, considering potential future emerging sectors and how they affect ES;
- **Identify the most essential ES in the ORs** and reach national-level and cross-border agreements;
- Make sure that consensus exists **on shared definitions and methodologies to evaluate ES**: MSFD and MSP should work under the same definitions and concepts of ES and EBM;
- Promote **ES assessments as a valuable approach** to be used in the MSP processes to better understand the trade-offs of key socioeconomic activities and support negotiations between the government and stakeholders' groups;
- Strive for a more **balanced appraisal and valuation** of ecological, cultural, and social services alongside economic ones.
- Integrate **policy, data collection, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement** to fully realize the potential of ES assessment in MSP;
- Strengthen **institutional capacities and integrate ES assessments into policymaking** at all levels to ensure proper uptake into MSP;
- Use **ES indicators as tools for monitoring and evaluating** ecological, socioeconomic, and policy MSP objectives by informing the understanding and appreciation of the multifaceted relationships between ES and their implications for society and human well-being.
- **Catalyze international cooperation** through ES assessments, as shared knowledge and harmonized methodologies that contribute to developing joint MSP strategies and address common challenges and goals.

~Key Messages~

Emerging Sectors can be new opportunities for the blue economy, either because they rely on new technologies that were not mature enough or because new potentialities have been discovered in the sea basin, making it possible to develop an activity that was not yet sufficiently present and structured.
New legislation and geopolitical or economic contexts can also explain the emergence of new sectors.

Maritime emerging sectors are rising in the ORs, promising economic revitalization, sustainable development, innovation, and cultural enrichment.
The unique geographical features of the ORs and their marine resources represent opportunities and challenges in realizing their full potential.
MSP can play a core role in maximizing the benefits of growth in maritime emerging sectors, serving as a guiding strategic tool to promote their development efficiently and environmentally responsibly, while minimizing the environmental footprint and ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources.
MSP M&E can yield valuable information to support decision-making and improve the management of these sectors in the face of changing circumstances.
Each region's distinct challenges underscore the importance of tailored M&E systems that address specific environmental, economic, and social contexts within MSP.

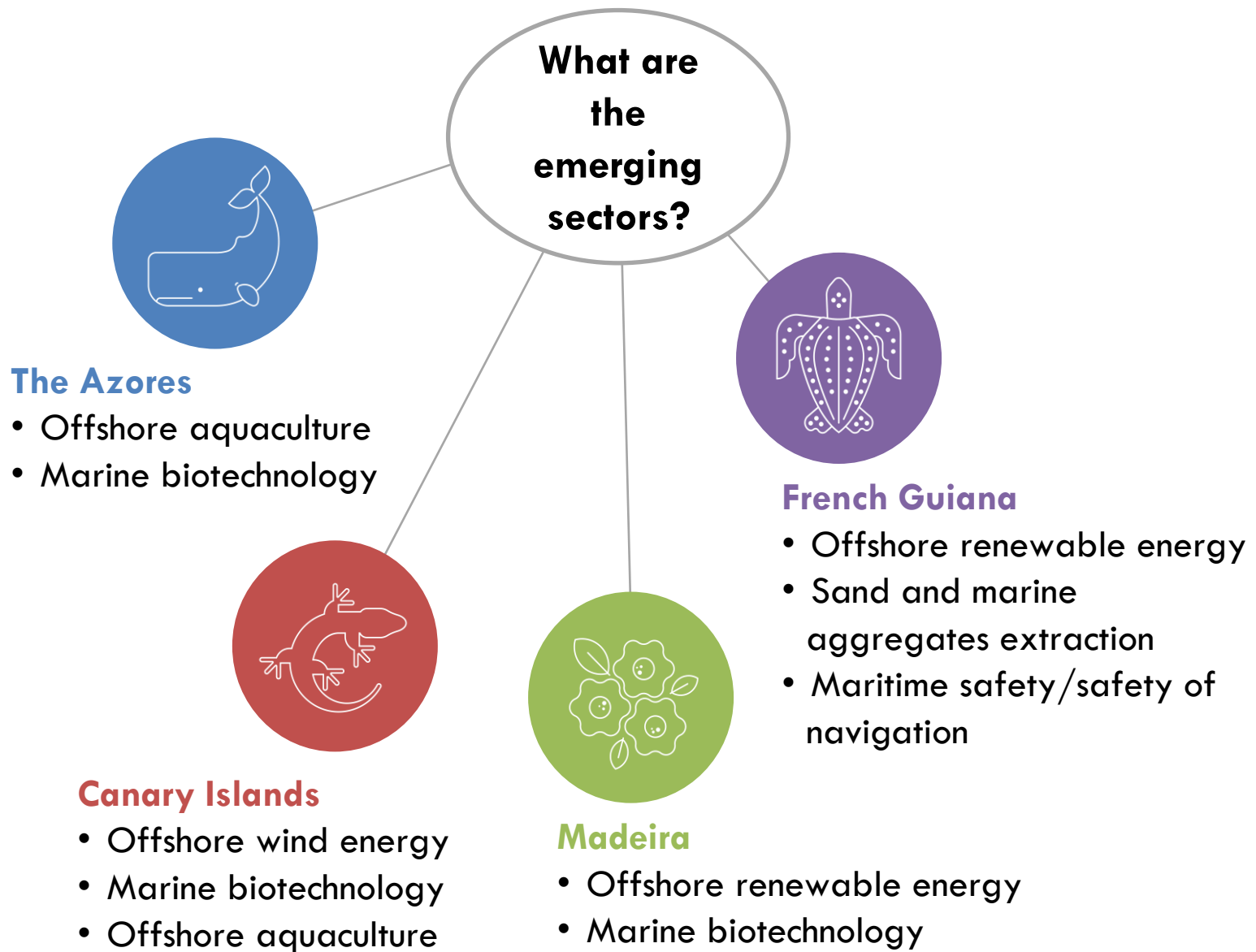**How are the Emerging Sectors involved with the MSP process in the ORs?**
~
What do the ORs already have in this regard?
~
What are the gaps observed?

What are the emerging sectors?

The Azores
- Offshore aquaculture
- Marine biotechnology

French Guiana
- Offshore renewable energy
- Sand and marine aggregates extraction
- Maritime safety/safety of navigation

Canary Islands
- Offshore wind energy
- Marine biotechnology
- Offshore aquaculture

Madeira
- Offshore renewable energy
- Marine biotechnology

Which type of analysis has been done (or is foreseen) for the allocation of new emerging sectors in official MSP processes?

| Which type of analysis have been done (or are foreseen) for the allocation of new emerging sectors in official MSP processes?	The Azores	French Guiana	Canary Islands	Madeira
Potential environmental impacts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Synergies and conflicts between activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Land-sea interactions	✓		✓	
Optimal oceanographic conditions			✓	✓
Climate change affections	✓			
Compatibility with conservation objectives		✓	✓	✓
Socio-economic impacts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legal (in)compatibilities	✓		✓	

In **Azores and Madeira,** the identified emerging sectors are included in the MSP plan for each subdivision (Situation Plan) and are viewed as sectors with the potential to enhance and diversify the regional blue economy.

The MSP framework in these regions is prepared to adapt to the fast changes and needs of these sectors. The dynamic nature of the MSP plan is predicted in its legal framework (art. 10.°, Decreto-Lei n.° 38/2015), which allows for some flexibility and adaptation of the plan.
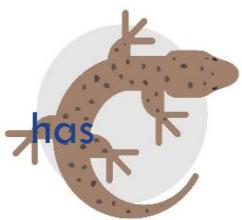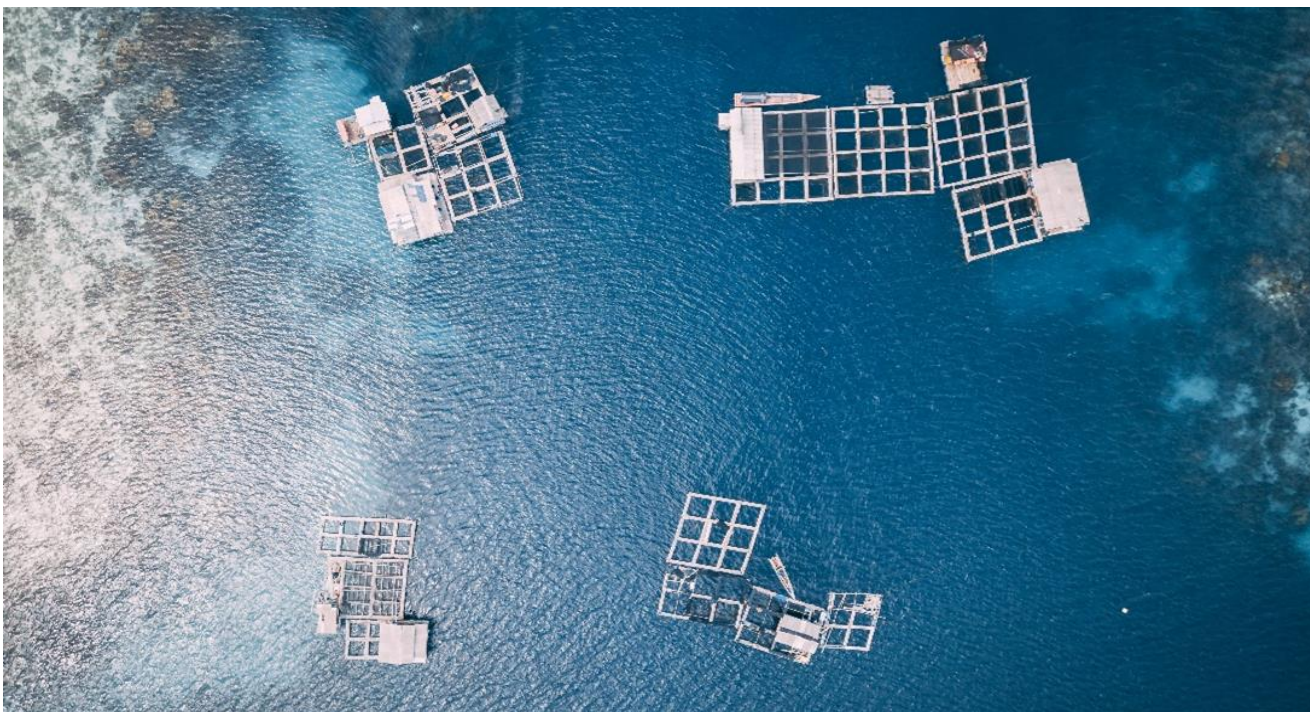
In the **Canary Islands**, the offshore wind energy sector has been involved in the MSP plans process through several meetings, online workshops, and public consultations. The MSP includes a specific measure to elaborate a more detailed and complete monitoring & evaluation, aiming to obtain an adaptive plan that detects and responds to changing needs.
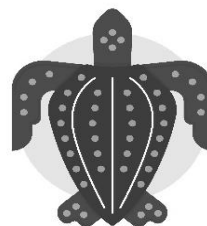
In **French Guiana**, these sectors are recognized as opportunities for economic development and are in preliminary stages of study and exploration. The MSP framework may have provisions within its legal framework that allow some flexibility and adaptation and could enable adjustments to the MSP plan in response to changing circumstances related to emerging sectors.

- Spatiotemporal dynamic and multi-thematic data is needed throughout the MSP process to designate areas for developing existing maritime sectors and activities;
- It is important to know how the process will accommodate an emerging sector and what new data is required to include its development coherently with the allocated activities within MSP.

Cover the following gaps and issues identified:

- In renewable energy the gaps include: insufficient information on the pelagic and seabed's nature, lack of detailed bathymetry, impact on fishing sector, availability of data on oceanic energy resources; potential environmental impacts; and safety of navigation/maritime safety analysis;
- Offshore aquaculture faces challenges such as the availability of data on oceanic energy resources, potential environmental impacts, and general knowledge gaps, specially in the further offshore environment.

An ecosystem-based approach to the emerging sectors is necessary for:

- Better acceptance from stakeholders, traditional activities and the general public to not view them as competitors for marine space;
- Ensure the correct integration of these evolving sectors in local economies and to limit the impact on the marine environment;
- Promoting and enabling stakeholders involvement from the beginning.

- For the role of MSP in supporting the development of emerging sectors to be fully realized, it is crucial to integrate capable monitoring and evaluation systems that track the implementation of MSP plans and their contribution to bring forward the potential of emerging sectors;
- For the effectiveness of MSP, integrate safety of navigation/maritime safety as one of the key dimensions of MSP plans to support deployment and development of maritime activities, co-existence and multi-use projects at sea basin level from digital and pan-European MSP perspectives.

More information and useful references to this Policy Brief can be consulted here:
msp-or-references-d64-policy-brief.pdf

Also, you can join us at the OR´s Ocean Governance Platform:
www.platform.msp-or.eu

About this Policy Brief:
The FRCT developed this publication with the scientific support of the University of the Azores and the MSP-OR consortium contributions. These policy recommendations resulted from the stakeholders' consultation and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations, the MSP-OR partners involved, or the European Commission.
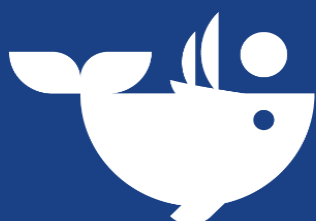
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