

## Main outcomes: Expert Workshop on SEA consultation best practices for MSP

The aim of the Expert Workshop was to further collect and validate current information on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) best practices for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) as part of Activity 1.5 of the [SEABAS project](#). During the workshop, participants received information of the SEABAS project's main outcomes and activities as well as the findings from Activity 1.5 on SEA best practice consultation compilation in MSP.

The findings of the compilation stage (literature review and consortium dedicated discussions) show 5 main elements forming the framework for SEA consultation best practices for MSP (Figure 1):

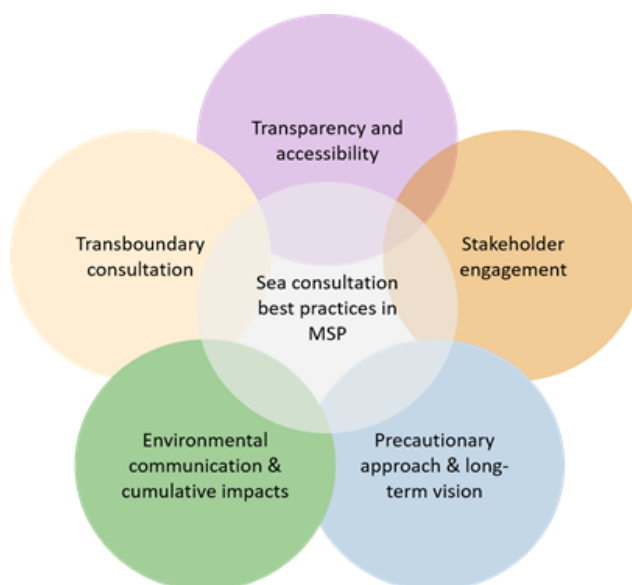


Figure 1. SEABAS Framework on SEA best practices for consultation processes in MSP.

Breakout sessions allowed participants to collect information regarding missing best practices and potential challenges in implementation of SEA consultation processes for MSP. Early sharing of information among countries, bilateral and multilateral meetings, targeted and multiple consultations with specific stakeholders, publicly available data, explanation of tools and terms used, and joint cumulative impact assessments and climate change scenarios, were needs identified from the breakout discussions. However, challenges highlighted by participants were: lack of a unified vision for MSP and the use of different methodologies for assessments across countries, limited resources and understanding of the legal system, lack of trust and mixed opinions among stakeholders, and the need for guidance on minimum criteria expected for the SEA consultation process and for the use of the precautionary approach.

During the plenary session, participants prioritized best practices for each element of the framework and discussed how realistic the implementation of best practices and solutions is,

considering administrative and financial constraints. Representatives shared how the SEA process works for different countries, where most countries seem to implement a continuous exchange with stakeholders for the consultation procedure, establish communication across countries, and seek solutions to improve compliance with Espoo procedures.

Finally, the group drafted 7 main recommendations to improve implementation of SEA consultation processes for MSP:

- 1) **Establishment of a common platform** for MSP and Espoo contact points to facilitate exchange information and expertise on SEA for MSP.
- 2) **Development of joint recommendations and common understanding** of the SEA procedure.
- 3) **Development of practical ways/guidance/tools** to nationally and regionally implement best practices for SEA procedures (e.g. self-assessment / checklists that aid compliance for specific topics).
- 4) **Implementation of iterative SEA consultation processes** (multiple consultations at different stages) to facilitate integration of feedback into MSPs and the involvement of stakeholders and public.
- 5) **Establishment of official expert meetings with formal agreements** to implement and establish a legal base to comply with Espoo procedures in a more transparent way.
- 6) **Launching of MSP and SEA processes together** to allow stakeholder involvement in both processes at early stages.
- 7) **Development of a minimum criteria for Espoo consultation processes** (2-pager) to be used by countries in early informing stages (prior to formal notice) to promote collaboration, improve exchange of information, and alleviate time-pressure constraints.