

THE EUROPEAN POLICY FOR THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT - THE NEW DIRECTIVE ON THE MARINE STRATEGY

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Marine pollution is by definition a **transboundary issue**.

Europe's marine waters cover over **3 million square kilometers** an area equal to the total european landmass.

The European marine environment in particular is under an **increasing number of threats**, namely:

- Effects of climate change
- Impacts of commercial fishing
- Introduction/invasion of non native species
- Eutrophication
- **Litter pollution**
- **Contamination by dangerous substances**
- **Microbiological pollution**

As Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas emphasized:

*"It is absolutely vital for the EU to protect its marine waters and to clean up its seas and oceans. Doing so requires an **integrated** approach to managing seas and oceans."*

This integrated approach, expressed by the European Marine Strategy, is one of the 7 thematic strategies resulting from the Communities 6th Environmental Action Programme.

[Decision 1600/2002, OJ L 242, 10.09.2002]

The European Marine Strategy consists of 3 documents:

1. A Communication presenting the European Marine Strategy [COM (2005) 504, 24.10.2005]
2. A proposal for the marine framework Directive [COM (2005) 505, 24.10.2005]
3. A Commission impact assessment

A number of relevant commitments have already been made before the adoption of the

European Marine Strategy including:

- The commitment to **halt biodiversity loss** by 2010
- Provisions to protect marine habitats and species under the **Habitats and Birds Directive** [92/43, OJ L 206, 22.07. 1992 and 179/409, OJ L 103, 25.04.1979]

- Targets to achieve good ecological status in coastal waters under the **Water Framework Directive** [2000/60 OJ L 327, 22.12.2000]

The member states are obliged by the Marine Framework Directive:

1. to ensure that EU marine waters are **environmentally healthy by 2020** at the latest and
2. to provide a comprehensive framework for the protection of water throughout its full cycle alongside with the **Water Framework Directive**

In order to have Environmentally healthy marine waters member states establish **Marine Regions and Sub-regions**, managed in an integrated manner.

The coastal states in the EU **have to** develop a maritime strategy for the European marine waters.

Member states are obliged:

1. to assess the state of the environment
2. to identify the main pressures in their marine regions.
3. to determine what can be considered as Good Environmental Status
4. to establish:
 - Targets
 - Indicators and
 - Monitoring programs

Good Environmental Status means [Art. 3]:

“the environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive within their intrinsic conditions and the use of the marine environment is at a level that is sustainable.”

In drawing marine strategies for waters within each marine region member states are required **to cooperate closely**.

Each marine strategy consists of **an Action Plan** to be implemented in several stages. Marine strategies will apply an ecosystem – based approach to the management of human activities to ensure that the **collective pressure** of such activities is kept with **sustainable levels**.

Programmes and Measures:

Member States (in respect of each Marine Region or Submarine Region) shall identify the measures which need to be taken in order to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status.

The **programmes and measures** must take into account:

- Directive on urban waste-water treatment [91/271, OJ L 135, 30.5.1991]
- Directive on bathing water quality [2006/7 OJ L 64, 4.03.2006]
- The Water Framework Directive [2000/60]
- International Agreements

Programmes of measures must be drawn up **by 2015** to attain the good environmental status **by 2020**.

Member States have to establish marine protected areas.

Member States sharing a marine region will need to cooperate to ensure that their marine strategies are coherent and coordinated.

Member States must make every effort to coordinate their activities with non-EU countries in the same marine region including through Regional Sea Conventions.

Marine waters covered by member states sovereignty or jurisdiction form an integral part of the following Marine Regions:

- **The Baltic Sea**
- **The North East Atlantic Ocean**
- **The Mediterranean Sea**
- **The Black Sea**

Member States shall establish and implement coordinated **monitoring programs** for the ongoing assessment of the environmental status.

Monitoring programs shall be compatible within Marine Regions or Sub-marine Regions and compatible with the relevant provisions for monitoring, as laid down

- by EU Legislation: Habitats or Birds Directive or
- by International Agreements.

Notifications and E. Commission's assessment

The E. Commission will assess whether in the case of each member state the elements **notified** constitute an appropriate framework to meet the requirements of this Directive.

Public consultation and participation Member states shall ensure that all interested parties are given early and effective opportunities **to participate** in the implementation of the Directive involving, where possible, existing management bodies or structures

Including:

- Regional Sea Conventions
- Scientific Advisory Bodies and
- Regional Advisory Bodies

Summarising:

The Marine Strategy Directive:

- Sets **common objectives and principles** at EU level
- establishes Marine Regions as **Management Unions** for implementation of the strategy
- Invites the member states to **cooperate** actively both among themselves as well as with third countries concerned