



Revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

AAC WG3 on Horizontal matters, February 2026

DG ENV, Unit C2



Evaluation: five problem areas



Legal framework



Unclear objectives, definitions procedures and geographic scope;



Implementation / enforcement



Insufficient implementation and enforcement; complex and burdensome implementation cycle.



Regional coordination



Great disparities across regions; varying levels of ambition of individual Member States within the same region.



Policy coherence



Misalignment with obligations under other frameworks, insufficient application of the EBA in wider maritime policy and integration climate change



Data management



Insufficient and non-harmonised monitoring, limited access to data, heavy and ineffective reporting.

Problem Definition

Root causes

- Complexity of legislation
 - Legal status and procedures for GES TVs unclear
 - GES deadline (2020) has already passed
 - EBA definition unclear and difficult to apply
 - Limitations in territorial scope of the Directive
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- Operational harmonised targets missing
 - Insufficient streamlining with water and nature legislation
 - PoMs only partially covering pressures
 - Weak application of MPAs
 - Insufficient funding and cooperation across administrations
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- Main implementation structures at regional level (i.e. RSCs) are not EU bodies
 - Non-EU membership in RSCs
 - Relationship between EC and RSCs unclear
 - Conflicting policy interests/agendas at regional level and duplication of efforts
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- Inconsistencies and overlaps with water, nature, maritime and fisheries policies
 - Inconsistencies in application of EBA (wider maritime policy)
 - Growing trends/pressures not well integrated
 - Climate change objectives and impacts not well integrated
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- Data collection/monitoring not harmonised across MS
 - Data collected & assessed inconsistent + insufficient quality
 - High reporting burden
 - Complexity of data infrastructures
 - Limited access to data reported, limited data sharing



Problem drivers

**Inadequate legal framework:
unclear objectives, definitions
and procedures**

**Insufficient implementation
and enforcement**

**Insufficient regional
cooperation and
coordination**

Insufficient policy coherence

**Inadequate data management
and reporting**



Main problems

**Overall goal of achieving
GES by 2020 has not
been met: seas are not
'clean, healthy,
productive and resilient'**

**Complex legal
framework creating
unnecessary
administrative burden**

Problem Tree



Objectives

General objectives

Increase the effective protection of the marine environment - progress towards GES

Simplify implementation and reduce administrative burden

Where is action needed? (Specific objectives)

1. Improve the Directive's **regulatory framework**

2. **Make the Directive more operational** (through better implementation and enforcement)

3. **Simplify** reporting, monitoring and data management

Revision announced under WRS & Ocean Pact



Objectives (2/2)

Specific Objectives

1. Improve regulatory framework



Specific Objectives

2. Make the Directive more operational



Specific Objectives

3. Simplify reporting, monitoring & data use



Operational objectives

1. Clarify the geographical scope of the Directive
2. Clarify the objectives, definitions and procedures (incl. timeline)

Operational objectives

3. Ensuring harmonised environmental targets towards GES
4. Ensuring effective measures are in place
5. Strengthening enforceability and accountability
6. Strengthening regional cooperation and coordination
7. Ensuring sufficient funding opportunities
8. Integrating climate change

Operational objectives

9. Simplifying the MSFD implementation framework and streamlining with other legislation
10. Reducing and simplifying reporting
11. Ensuring access to quality data from harmonised MSFD monitoring



Possible scenarios (option packages)

I. Baseline scenario



No legislative changes
Implementation current framework
Complemented with guidance (being developed in the CIS)

II. Targeted revision + soft law



Targeted legislative changes (GES deadline, simplifying and streamlining implementation)
COM Guidelines and Recommendations

III. Full legislative revision



GES TVs strengthened
Operational targets
Streamlining of relevant frameworks and integration of climate change
Effective regional cooperation and coordination
Harmonised data management



Sub-option (1):

The EU high ambition scenario

Sub-option (2):

Regional scenario



Estimated timeline IA & legislative proposal





Consultations

- Call for Evidence and Public Consultation (until 9 March)
 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/16093-Marine-environment-protection-revision-of-EU-rules_en
- Targeted surveys:
 - Research and academia: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/7779bbe9-dafa-bf1a-85d8-68b4bf39519a>
 - Consumer organisation, Environmental organization, Non-governmental organisation (NGO), trade union: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/a76f1a61-cbdf-200f-8fb8-fc6a206d601e>
 - Company, Business, Business association: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/3d347010-28e5-1c46-bde6-8f5b3a247b6e>



Thank you



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