

AAC policy brief - Recommendation on the Ocean Act

The Ocean Act, to be developed in the context of the Ocean Pact (COM (2025) 281)¹, aims to strengthen ocean governance in the EU, to reinforce and modernise Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and to improve ocean observation governance.

The AAC welcomes these initiatives and endorses the related objectives as described in the introductory EU document for the call for evidence and for the public consultation the Ocean Act.

From an analysis of the documents assessing the impact of the Directive 2014/89/EU establishing a framework for MSP², it appears that the implementation of the MSP directive has been initiated in most member states, but remains incomplete and uneven. Spatial planning for freshwater remains a critical issue. The impact on the simplification of licensing procedures and on the space available for aquaculture is still limited. Integrated data management appears to be fragmented and poorly harmonised and standardised.

Although the Ocean Pact and MSP focus on seas and oceans, and despite the title "Ocean Pact", the AAC would like to remind that the overall framework is intended as a series of measures concerning marine, brackish, and freshwater bodies, following a From-source-to-Sea approach.

To operate within a coherent strategic and political framework, as noted in the AAC 2024 recommendation³ and subsequent recommendations, we believe that the "Aquaculture Policy Reform" can become a pillar of the future Ocean Pact policies unified framework.

To ensure that EU strategies on MSP and data management are translated into action, we emphasize the importance of developing concrete and binding projects designed to become the cornerstone of multi-actor decision-making and cooperation at all levels (platforms, forums, etc.). We believe that provisions limited to strengthening coordination, as well as increasing the sharing of data and best practices, is not sufficient to achieve an efficient and adaptive MSP.

In the regard of MSP, we recommend:

1. to define binding objectives, projects and timeline in the context of the AAC proposal for a "Aquaculture Policy Reform" as supported in the APR report;
2. to include a specific chapter on MSP implementation in all Member States "Multi-annual National Strategic Plans" (MNSPs) for aquaculture, to introduce annual reporting from all MS and to develop "unified national MSP platforms" as part of the broader integrated sea-basin management plans.

In regard of data management, we recommend:

1. to define binding methodologies for standardization and harmonisation at all levels;
2. to develop "unified national integrated data monitoring platforms" to "serve as single reference point for all economic, climate, environmental and social targets.";
3. to fully integrate MS "unified national integrated data monitoring platforms" into the "European MSP Platform" and EMODnet.

¹ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7bdfa1ab-6cd7-45bd-96eo-ocooc2c413d4_en?filename=European-Ocean-Pact-COM_2025_281.pdf&prefLang=pt

² [Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning - Publications Office of the EU](#)

³ <https://aac-europe.org/en/publication/aac-recommendation-on-the-oceans-pact/>



4. to set up funding tools for MS to implement binding objectives and projects, included the use of EMFAF and the support through the "Technical Support Instrument";
5. to fully development and make operational the use of the Digital Twin of the Ocean (DTO).

