

# VISUAL TOOLS FOR MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING: AN INFOGRAPHICS SCREENING

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## Abstract

Ocean Literacy implies not only educational but also cultural and outreach actions related to marine sciences and processes. The present research investigates the visual communication effort put in place by some countries in and for their Maritime Spatial Plans using the EU MSP Platform. The screening takes into account the presence of infographics in MSP plans or in linked official communication materials. The overall quantitative results and key examples are discussed. This study opens a path of study on the visual communication of MSP.

*Keywords: Marine policy, Western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean*

## Introduction

Ocean literacy is nowadays considered a framework to promote the sociocultural aspects of Marine Spatial Planning [1]. In its broadening scope we wish to consider the visual communication that can be retraced in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes at European level. The study aimed at identifying and quantifying the presence of infographic in MSP plans, as approved by EU Member States and publicly available. The plans from the United Kingdom were also included in the analysis since they were mostly approved before Brexit. This exercise helps understanding the role of visual communication as an enabler of MSP processes according to the MSP Directive [2].

## Methodology

The study screened the countries' official web pages and documents accessible via the MSP Platform. "Plans", i.e. policy documents, and related communication materials approved by the government were considered. The choice was motivated by the fact that plans are heterogeneous in their nature and outcomes. Other forms of visual communication (diagrams, illustrations, layouts) and maps, inherently present in MSP documents were not included in the study. We only considered the use of infographics (as defined by [3] and [4]), and motion graphics, a form of infographics in which written text is mainly replaced by an oral description and a narrative is presented in a sequence. We specified when motion graphics have been employed not only as a promotional tool but as a way to present specific visions within the plan. We also specified the type of infographic according to the classification proposed by [5].

## Results

Only 7 out of 23 plans employed infographics, none in the Mediterranean Sea. Only the English and Finnish infographics are included in legally binding documents. The Finnish infographics, as a digital format, were used structurally, i.e. as a tool to convey information that is expected to trigger intellectual and emotional engagement. This is also the only case in which a limited level of interactivity can be retraced, thanks to the slider. Diagrams are used more often (12 cases) but generally to organize more simple information.

## Conclusions

The study shows that, in general, the infographics were not extensively used. This can be linked to several reasons, often limited access to time and financial resources. It must be said that maps are a priority in this type of management tool, hence, the possibility that more importance was given to those types of visualization rather than in developing infographics. However, this can also show a lack of effort and willingness to engage citizens and stakeholders and it may also imply a low level of transparency if a plan remains in a technical language.

Tab. 1. Infographics presence in MSP plans by country.

	Country	Infographic presence
1	BE	Motion graphics, a short animation presenting the plan.
2	BG	No
3	CY	No
4	DK	No
5	EE	Infographics are used in a video presentation hosted in the official webpage.
6	FI	Yes (Process and Geographical Based). Interactive infographics to show sector-specific roadmaps. Motion Graphics for Area-specific development visions.
7	FR	No
8	DE	No
9	IT	Yes, planning areas and units sintesis.
10	LV	No
11	LT	No
12	MT	No
13	NL	No
14	PL	No
15	PT	no
16	IE	Yes (Timeline/Process Based) to present roadmap to national MSP framework.
17	SI	No
18	ES	No
19	SE	No
20	GB-EN	Yes (Statistical Based), summary infographic. Explanatory motion graphic for promotion of the general process.
21	GB-NI	No
22	GB-SCO	No. Use of motion graphics in a video promoting the 2020 assessment of the plan.
23	GB-WE	Yes (Process Based) regarding terrestrial planning permission. Use of motion graphics to present the general process of MSP.

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