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JOINT MONITORING OF THE NORTH SEA – MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?

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ABSTRACT

In 2008 the European Parliament and Council of the European Union adopted The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive in order to protect the marine environment across Europe more effectively, i.a. the North Sea. Following its implementation by the seven EU member states bordering the North Sea*, each state has analyzed the features and characteristics across their national North Sea region based on which, premises for good environmental status will be determined. This status or target must be achieved by 2020 qua a Program of Measures which is assessed on a regular basis qua a Monitoring Program. In other words, the North Sea marine environment is presently protected by seven EU member states (plus Norway) through a national Program of Measures, a national Monitoring Program and on national premises for good environmental status. The transboundary nature of the North Sea, however, cries for close cooperation and coordination among the North Sea states to protect this waterbody as a whole. Hence, it should be obvious to aim for international consensus between the states on premises for good environmental status for North Sea, followed up by a North Sea Program of Measures and a North Sea Monitoring Program. Is this a mission impossible? Not necessarily – but the barriers are several as seen from both a political perspective, management related, and from a scientific point of view. However, cost effectiveness, integrated ecosystem understanding, standardized monitoring techniques making intercalibration redundant, and rectified premises for good environmental status are just a few examples of joint monitoring advantages. Based on a recent completed EU pilot project: Towards joint monitoring for the North Sea and the Celtic Sea, the presentation discusses pros and cons of such a joint mission but also point to the barriers of joint monitoring.

*Sweden, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, and United Kingdom



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