



Maritime Spatial Planning
Country Information

Netherlands

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Background Information

Basic facts on Marine Waters



— Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) — Territorial Sea Existing Plans

- Size of Planning Area: 58,000 km² (Territorial sea and EEZ).
- Only the central government has jurisdiction over marine areas beyond 1 km from the coast (the first km is shared with municipal and provincial authorities).

Overview of Maritime Spatial Planning-related uses and issues

- Priority activities of national interest: oil and gas extraction, shipping, sand extraction, renewable energy, defence, CO₂ storage (considered in the official Policy Document as a temporary solution while progress is made to a fully renewable energy supply).
- National spatial challenges for the North Sea: preservation of the “coastal foundation”¹ (*kustfundament*) and implementation of the area-based Coastal and Wadden Region sub-programmes; preservation and protection of Natura 2000 sites and the marine ecosystem; maintaining an unobstructed view of the horizon up to 12nm from the coast; providing space for the network of pipelines that transports (hazardous) substances; protection of archaeological values.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General

The Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is responsible for managing and coordinating the Integrated North Sea Policy, and thus MSP. The Interdepartmental Directors’ Consultative Body North Sea supports the Minister when it comes to elaborating the Integrated North Sea Policy and is considered to be the lead planning agency. Other ministries represented in this body include the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate; the Ministry of

¹ The “coastal foundation” (*kustfundament*) refers to the area along the length of the coast comprising the seabed immediately in front of the coast to the -20m depth contour, the beach, the dunes and all sea defences on these. (Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte Nederland concurrerend, bereikbaar, leefbaar en veilig. Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2012)

Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; and the Ministry for Finance.

The National Water Plan provides a policy framework for MSP based on the Water Act and includes the Policy Document for the North Sea 2016-2021 as an appendix. The Policy Document includes the Netherlands' Maritime Spatial Plan and reflects the Dutch Government's policy choices for the North Sea. Every 6 years the plan is revised. The first policy document and plan were published in 2009.

Planning at national level

- The Central Government's North Sea Policy sets out a framework for the spatial use of the North Sea in relation to the marine ecosystem (as part of the governance structure for integrated maritime policy).
- The North Sea Policy document applies to the Dutch EEZ and the non-administratively classified Territorial Sea. Special attention is paid to the land-sea interaction.

National MSP authority

- Interdepartmental Directors' Consultative Body North Sea led by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

Details

The Water Act (Waterwet) stipulates an obligation to draw up a national water plan (Section 4.1(1)) and Section 4.1(3)b stipulates that ministers must include a North Sea policy in this plan. The National Water Plan also provides the framework vision as defined by Section 2.3(2) of the Spatial Planning Act (Wet ruimtelijke ordening). The Ministers responsible for the National Water Plan are those for Infrastructure and Water Management and Economic Affairs and Climate (Section 1.1(1) of the Water Act).

Different divisions in several ministries have the responsibility of implementing the Policy Document for the North Sea. The Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management is responsible for coordinating policy and management and the Interdepartmental Directors' Consultation Body North Sea (IDON) supports the Minister in matters relating to the creation, elaboration and evaluation of the integrated North Sea Policy. Represented within IDON, based on a variety of policy dossiers, are directors from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Rijkswaterstaat (the Dutch maritime and marine management organisation), the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Defence, and the Coastguard. Rijkswaterstaat is the coordinating management authority that collaborates with the other authorities on harmonisation of the various management tasks, particularly permit issuance and information management.

To support the Coastguard, six Ministries collaborate on enforcement, shipping control and responses to incidents and disasters in the North Sea. In the case of shipping control and incident response, the Coastguard is directed by the Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management. In the case of enforcement (general enforcement, enforcement of environmental legislation, traffic safety and fishing), the Coastguard is directed by the Permanent Contact Group Enforcement North Sea (PKHN), in which relevant ministries are represented.

Progress

The Policy Document covers the time period 2016 – 2021 and is an update from the 2009 – 2015 Policy Document. The country is now in the third cycle of the MSP, with the previous one set to end in 2021. As part of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027, a new MSP is currently being prepared for the same period.

Maritime Spatial Plans

Existing Maritime Spatial Plans

Policy Document on the North Sea 2016 – 2021 includes a framework vision map, which currently constitutes the Netherlands' Maritime Spatial Plan.

Pilot plans or projects

Not legally binding:

- MASPNOSE: DG-MARE funded project (2010-2012) with pilot cross-border MSP case studies: 1) Thornton Bank (focus on wind energy) (Netherlands and Belgium) and 2) Dogger Bank (focus on fisheries plan) (Netherlands, Germany, UK).

Maritime Spatial Plan: Policy Document on the North Sea, 2016 – 2021

The Policy Document contains information on the following economic sectors:

- Shipping
- Mineral extraction
- Oil and gas exploitation
- Offshore renewable energy production
- Fishing
- Aquaculture
- Tourism (incl. recreation and sports)
- Underwater cultural heritage
- Nature protection
- Military
- Submarine cables and pipelines

Legal basis

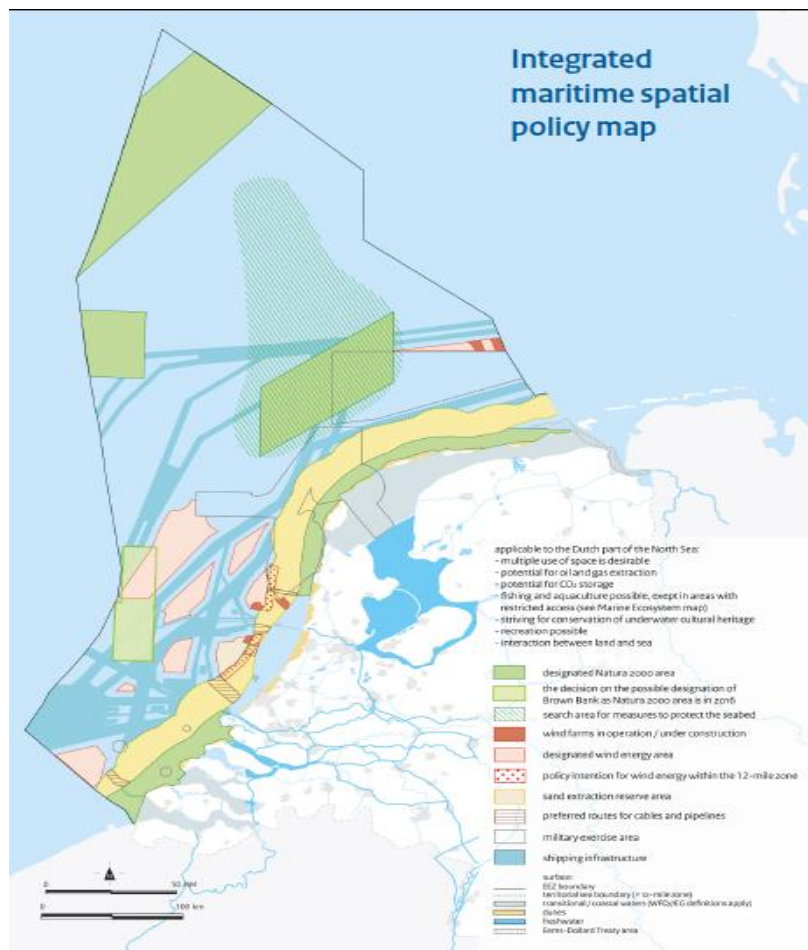
The Policy Document on the North Sea is not itself a legal document but was prepared on the basis of part 3.4 of the General Administrative Law Act (Algemene wet bestuursrecht), under Article 4.1 of the Water Decree (Waterbesluit). Additional procedural regulations apply under the National Water Act (Waterwet), the Spatial Planning Act (Wet ruimtelijke ordening) and the Environmental Management Act (Wet milieubeheer).

The National Water Act is the legal basis for MSP (see above). The current National Water Plan (NWP) fulfils the obligation under Section 4.1(1) of the Water Act for the period 2016-2021. The Policy Document on the North Sea is an appendix to the NWP and was adopted along with the NWP in December 2015. It complements and substantiates the policy described in the main text of the NWP, and provides a framework vision for MSP as required under Section 2.3(2) of the Spatial Planning Act.

Legal impact

The Policy Document, which includes the integrated maritime spatial policy map, along with the Marine Strategy for the Dutch Part of the North Sea 2012-2020 Part 3, which is the programme of measures for implementation, are both used to regulate activities in the area through a permitting system. It sets out the rules for the different activities and how potential conflicting interactions between activities of national interest should be addressed. The emphasis is on cooperation with neighbouring countries, making sea usage sustainable, using an area-based approach for the most significant resources, developing a species policy and creating opportunities for active ecosystem recovery. Monitoring the various developments is important as a basis for adaptive management.

Area covered



Map: Integrated maritime spatial policy map
Source: Policy Document in the North Sea, 2016-2021

The plan area covers the Dutch EEZ and the territorial sea.

Historic development

In 2015, the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment included, for the first time, a chapter on the North Sea in the national 'Spatial Planning Policy Document'. Based on this, an Integrated Management Plan for the North Sea 2005-2015 was developed which contained an analysis of uses of the sea and opportunity maps for new developments (wind energy, increased sand mining, nature protection). An assessment framework was developed for licensing. In 2009 a more strategic and forward-looking plan was produced with a greater focus on spatial development (Policy Document on the North Sea, 2009) and was part of the 2010 NWP. The development of a new Policy Document on the North Sea was announced to the Dutch House of Representatives in January 2014 and in the Dutch government gazette in June 2014. Neighbouring countries were informed in July 2014. The draft plan was open for public consultation between January and June 2015. During this period, the draft plan was presented and discussed during trips to neighbouring countries. The new document for 2016-2021 was adopted with the current NWP in December 2015.ⁱ

Objectives of the plan

The Policy Document sets out the desired policy for the use of space within the limits of the marine ecosystem. The Central Government sets the spatial frameworks, allowing the use of space in the North Sea to develop in an efficient and sustainable manner.

The policy and plan are in line with the long-term vision, based on the North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda, which indicates how the North Sea and the policy should develop.

The Policy Document also includes the programme of measures (part 3) of the Marine Strategy for the Dutch section of the North Sea 2012-2020 for achieving the desired ‘good environmental status’ by 2020,ⁱⁱ i.e. that the “North Sea is clean, healthy and productive, the ecosystem is functioning optimally and is resilient, and the use of the North Sea is sustainable”.

Designated uses/areas

The Policy Document lays out the following policy decisions in relation to different uses of the Dutch waters of the North Sea:



Marine ecosystems

- The conservation and recovery of the marine ecosystem are assessed when making decisions about the spatial planning of economic activities.
- Protection of Marine Natura 2000 sites: Voordelta, North Sea Coastal Zone, Vlake van de Raan, Dogger Bank, Cleaver Bank and Frisian Front. As yet, there is no decision on the designation of Brown Bank Ridge as a Natura 2000 site.

Marine Strategy (Part 3) programme of measures:

- Existing measures relating to the marine ecosystem cover: fisheries and shellfish management, invasive exotic species, eutrophication, pollutants, litter and underwater noise;
- New measures are planned in relation to litter and seabed protection.



Renewable energy

- This activity is of national interest.
- Space for operational capacity of 4,450 MW of offshore wind energy by 2023.
- The following are designated wind energy areas: Borssele, Coast of Holland, IJmuiden Ver and North of the Wadden Islands. The Central Government does not grant permission for wind farms to be built outside designated wind energy areas. Within designated areas, permission is granted only for wind farms built according to the requirements of the Offshore

Wind Energy Act (Wet windenergie op zee). In March 2018, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy announced the ‘Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap 2030’. The Roadmap 2030 outlines plans and designates locations where new wind farms may be built between 2024 and 2030.

Development must be in harmony with other uses of the North Sea; the Policy Document thus provides:

- A design criterion for maintaining appropriate distance between shipping routes and wind farms.
- A design process for calculating appropriate distance between mining sites and wind farms
- The specific conditions under which, from 2017, passage and multiple use will be allowed.



Surface minerals

- Sand extraction for coastal defences and filling is an activity of national interest.
- Sand extraction strategy with preferred routes for cables and pipelines to connect with shore at existing locations or where sand is shallow. Reserved zone and policy exist for deeper mining (10m).



Oil and gas extraction

- This activity is of national interest.
- Making the most of the potential of oil and gas reserves.



Cables and pipelines

- These are needed for the following activities (all of which are of national interest): (wind) energy, oil and gas extraction and CO₂ transport, including the necessary cables and pipelines.
- Cables and pipelines should be bundled together; and cables and pipelines should be removed from the seabed when no longer in use.
- Tighten up removal obligation for pipelines.
- Checklist for determining removal obligation for cables or pipelines must be revised.



Shipping

- This activity is of national interest.
- Maintaining a system of traffic separation schemes, clearways and anchoring areas capable of accommodating vessels safely and swiftly.
- Implementing measures to reduce pollution caused by shipping (merchant vessels, fishing vessels, offshore, supply and recreation).



Defence

- This activity is of national interest.
- There must be sufficient military exercise zones in the North Sea.



Fishing, aquaculture, mariculture

- Sector should foster responsible fishing and aquaculture practices and balanced use of fish stocks, striving towards a state of equilibrium between fishing and nature and a different division of responsibilities between government and industry.
- Continue to contribute to the primary objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and implement measures with regard to the marine ecosystem.



Underwater cultural heritage

- The conservation of underwater cultural heritage is assessed when making spatial planning decisions on activities.



Tourism and recreation

- Facilitate and encourage the tourism and recreation sector as a network partner in a partnership between entrepreneurs, market institutions and research organisations.
- Engage in dialogue with local and regional government authorities and other parties where spatial planning or other policy developments in the North Sea, may result in an impact to marine and coastal recreation.



Interaction between land and sea

- When formulating spatial planning policy, specific attention needs to be paid to the interaction between land and sea, having due regard for the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive.

International cooperation

- Follow a thematic approach to partnerships with neighbouring countries.

Planning regulations

The assessment framework outlined in the North Sea Policy Document is the mechanism that the Central Government uses to ascertain whether activities at sea are permitted. The assessment framework combines relevant policies and outlines how decisions on new activities are made within the European and international frameworks. It also outlines what action should be taken if various activities of national importance clash amongst themselves.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

An SEA and evaluation of the Policy Document has been undertaken. The SEA was carried out for the revision of the National Water Plan: this assessed the policy decisions pertaining to the North Sea in relation to nature, water, soil, landscape, cultural history, archaeology, designated uses and sustainability. The SEA took into account the results of a public consultation undertaken in 2014 on the Memorandum on Scope and Detailing (NRD) for the SEA.

Public Participation

During the process of preparing the Draft Policy Document, stakeholders, representing the different uses of the sea, and environmental NGOs were informed of the scope of the document and consulted on specific issues. A public consultation was held on the Draft Policy Document on the North Sea and the draft of the Marine Strategy part 3 (WFD), as part of the NWP, from December 2014 to June 2015. A total of 110 responses were received, of which about half related to the Marine Strategy, with requests for further attention to be given to marine litter, lead concentrations in the sea, fishing techniques and marine nature reserves. The other responses concerned a variety of elements of the North Sea Policy and the use of sea space: policy for cables and pipelines, passage and multiple use, the visibility of wind farms and the connection with the land, the environmental impact and the framework for ecology and accumulation of impact on the marine environment, the treatment of archaeological heritage and the policy decisions regarding sand extraction and ammunition dump sites.

Two formal meetings with representatives from the various sectors were also held during this period.

All the comments from the public were addressed by the Government in the [Answer Memorandum](#). The Central Government amended the Policy Document on the North Sea to address points raised in the comments presented during the public consultation.

Transboundary Consultation

On 8 July 2014, a letter was sent to the governments of neighbouring countries informing them of the proposal to draft the Policy Document on the North Sea. In the first half of 2015, official visits were paid to the competent authorities in Belgium, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany to discuss the spatial planning for the Dutch part of the North Sea. England and France were also contacted. The Policy Document lays out the approach to be taken for transboundary cooperation (see the section below).

Harmonisation with other plans

The Policy Document is an appendix to the National Water Plan.

It also complements the 2050 North Sea Spatial Agenda, which provides the long-term vision for sustainable development, responding to the European Commission strategy for 'Blue Growth'. The Spatial Agenda provides an integrated conceptual framework for marine and maritime policy centring on responsible, safe and space-efficient use of the sea and the Policy Document specifies which activities will be undertaken in the 2016-2021 period.

Monitoring & Review

The Policy Document will be updated in accordance with the National Water Plan and timeframes set in the EU MSP Directive. In 2018, the Marine Strategy part 1 was reviewed, including a progress report on the programme of measures. The Marine Strategy part 2 was reviewed in 2020. A review of the Policy Document was carried out in 2018 under the National Environmental Vision and this involved conducting further analysis of impacts on the environment and achievement of the various ambitions for the North Sea and, on that basis, assessing whether (in the longer term) this might lead to conflicts and/or risks of significant environmental impact requiring early decision-making and/or prioritisation.

Electronic resources

Policy Document on the North Sea 2016-2021:

https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/Policy%20Document%20on%20the%20North%20Sea%202016-2021%20%28download%29_4895.pdf

North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda

https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/North%20Sea%202050%20Spatial%20Agenda_LO%20RES_3562.pdf

MSP in development: North Sea Programme 2022-2027

The country is currently in its third cycle of MSP, which will expire in 2021 therefore they are in the process of developing a new programme for the following five years as part of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027. Three elements form a basis for MSP policy, planning process and decision making in the Netherlands: the North Sea Agreement; the North Sea Council; and the North Sea Programme 2022 – 2027; where the North Sea Council is not a decision-making body.

The North Sea Programme 2022-2027 and the North Sea Agreement (endorsed by the Dutch Parliament in January 2021) provide direction for the extensive developments in the North Sea over the coming years. It was decided that another 7 GW of renewable wind energy should be installed by 2030 (1 GW per year in the period 2023-2030). Finding a good balance between energy, ecology and food (both fisheries and aquaculture) is the biggest challenge for the new programme.

The North Sea Program will be part of the new National Water Programme 2022-2027. It includes an ecosystem-based spatial development plan incorporating MSFD and WFD.

There will be three parts to the North Sea Programme:

1. Programme of measures for the MSFD.
2. Focus on the triangle of resources: Energy – Nature – Fisheries, taking other interests into account.
3. Blue growth initiatives and supporting actions, such as allowing other additional uses of the sea, for example seaweed growing and using floating solar panels in the new wind parks.

Solutions to alleviate the tension between the renewable energy, sustainable fisheries while strengthening nature protection are addressed by the programme and for this particular issue, a separate stakeholder process - development of the North Sea Agreement - took place under the responsibility of an independent chairman. It required an intensive process at administrative level, including monthly meetings to reach agreements on sustainable use and development of the North Sea, a Joint Fact Finding mission on interdependent issues, development of inter-ministerial network, as well as open discussions on setting up the North Sea Council. The North Sea Agreement was endorsed by the Dutch Parliament in January 2021 and this agreement forms important content for the North Sea Programme 2022-2027. The intensive process towards the North Sea Agreement has achieved interlinked agreements on: criteria for offshore wind energy areas, nature conservation areas, oil and gas extraction, planning process, financial means for transition; and the establishment of a permanent North Sea Council. The fisheries sector has not become part of the North Sea Agreement, and the mediation process is currently ongoing.

The North Sea Programme 2022-2027 includes the Dutch MSP Plan that is a self-binding policy document for spatial development at sea. Spatial elements of the North Sea Agreement deliver a basis for policy making in:

- Search areas for offshore wind energy
- Nature conservation areas
- Shipping lanes
- ‘Area passports’ wind energy locations
- Sustainable blue economy
- Land-sea interactions with provinces.

Strategic Environmental Assessment is part of the Programme.

The North Sea Programme, in addition to introducing new policies in many areas, provides ambitions in relation to offshore wind energy that would require further ecological research. The draft MSP identifies the search areas for an additional 27 Giga Watt of offshore wind.

The National Water Programme with the North Sea Programme was in consultation, from 22 March until 21 September 2021 (6 months). It is also currently undergoing the mandatory independent advisory revision of the Netherlands Commission for environmental assessment. International cross-border consultation will take place via ESPOO. The formal adoption of the North Sea MSP Programme 2022-2027 is foreseen for March 2022.

In March 2021, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management presented MSP in the Netherlands to an international audience during the MSP global event “Sharing national MSP practices worldwide: The Netherlands”.²

More information is available at:

Dutch only:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2021/03/18/4-ontwerp-programma-noordzee-2022-2027>

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/beleid/noordzee-2030/>

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/>

English version: <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/policy/development-2030/>

² <https://www.mspglobal2030.org/events/online-seminar-on-sharing-national-msp-practices-worldwide-netherlands-en-fr-es/>

North Sea Agreement: <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/policy/north-sea-agreement/>

Aspects of the MSP process

The Central Government acted in accordance with the requirements of the MSP Directive when formulating the Policy Document on the North Sea.

Sustainable development and growth in the maritime sector

The Central Government is aiming for a development-based approach to the sea that leaves room for new initiatives and flexible management. The North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda provides an integrated conceptual framework for marine and maritime policy centring on responsible, safe and space-efficient use of the sea, oriented towards sustainable development, and reflecting the European Commission's strategy for 'Blue Growth' in the long-term.

The North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda identifies five themes which will play a key role in future developments and are reiterated in the Policy Document:

1. Building with nature: link the maintenance of marine biodiversity and the health of marine waters with the provision of food (e.g. fisheries, mariculture of shellfish and algae), sustainable marine infrastructure development and improved water quality.
2. Energy transition at sea: further develop wind energy production and introduce other forms of renewable energy (e.g. wave, deep water geothermal, sea water heat pumps), in order to increase the amount of energy generated per km² and prepare an Energy Master Plan.
3. Multiple use of space: management of locations where activities can be combined with others in the same area (e.g. mariculture with wind farms and sand extraction recovery areas; wind farms and sustainable fishing).
4. Connections between land and sea: with a focus on tourism, recreation and cultural/archaeological aspects.
5. Accessibility and shipping: the increase in short-sea shipping, ships using Arctic routes, and maintenance vessels working with energy projects at sea will require specific policies to be developed.



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

The Policy Document states that the ecosystem approach and the precautionary principle will be actively applied. See "Environmental aspects" below.



Resilience to climate change impacts

Climate change and climate adaptation are considered in the Policy Document with respect to coastal defence, impacts to the marine ecosystem, extreme weather and sea level rise, and transition to carbon-neutral energy supply (renewable energy).



Land-sea interactions

Land-sea interactions are explicitly considered in section 3.13 of the Policy Document, and an overview of sectors/usages and their spatial land-sea interactions is provided in Table 3.2 of that the same document. The Policy Document requires that specific attention should be paid to these interactions in the implementation of MSP.



Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders are invited to consult informally during the process of drafting the plan and formally on a draft MSP Plan. Stakeholders can provide continuous input to the Policy Document through the general mechanisms of the House of Representatives and participation procedures on major policies and legislation. The website www.noordzeeloket.nl provides all the relevant governmental information on the North Sea, including its management and spatial planning. See more information in the section 'Public Participation' for the Policy Document on the North Sea, 2016 – 2021.



Co-existence of uses

The assessment framework outlined in the North Sea Policy Document is the mechanism that the Central Government uses to ascertain whether activities at sea are permitted. This framework combines relevant policies and outlines how decisions on new activities are made within the European and international frameworks. The Policy encourages multiple use of space where appropriate and outlines the action to be taken in situations where there is a conflict of interest between activities of national importance.



Transboundary cooperation

The Policy Document in Section 6 addresses international cooperation and acknowledges its importance for the North Sea. Proposed approaches to international cooperation with respect to spatial planning processes, wind energy, marine ecosystems, shipping and food supply are laid out.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Netherlands has followed the 3-step process laid out under the MSFD to produce its Marine Strategy. In October 2012 it started the Marine Strategy for the Dutch part of the North Sea 2012-2020, Part I (initial assessment, good environmental status to be achieved and the associated targets and indicators [32 in total]). Part 2 of the Marine Strategy describes the monitoring programme for practical measurement of the indicators and was produced in 2014. Part 3, the Dutch programme of measures, was prepared in 2015 and is appended to the Policy Document.

The Cabinet established the MSFD programme of measures at the end of 2015, together with the NWP. In the spring of 2016, within three months of establishing the MSFD programme of measures, the report was submitted to the European Commission.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

The Netherlands aims to implement ICZM in accordance with the 2002 European Recommendation on ICZM, and chapter 3.13 which addresses interactions between the land and the sea. The 2013 National Coastal Vision, prepared as part of the Delta Programme, provided a comprehensive vision for the development of a safe, attractive and economically robust coast. The regional government is responsible for spatial coastal development. Coastal policy is aimed at working wherever possible with soft sea defences to encourage ecosystem restoration. This means that nature will be given freer rein in some places but less in others, depending on the requirements for flood defences, beach recreation or other purposes.

Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Policy Document and associated measures comply with the requirements laid out under the WFD. The measures under the WFD are analysed based on their impact on the marine environment and if needed, extra measures are defined under the MSFD.

Natura 2000

Natura 2000 sites are considered in the Policy Document for the North Sea. The Cabinet aims to employ an area-based approach to safeguard protection of vulnerable ecological areas and species (where necessary), as in the case of Natura 2000 sites and the MSFD search area for seabed protection measures. The fundamental principle is not to close off such areas, but rather to regulate or suppress uses that would endanger the environmental values and features of these sites.

Common Fisheries Policy

The Policy Document recognises the EU competence on setting fishing measures and addresses this in section 4.2. The key elements of the Policy Document are: fostering responsible fishing and aquaculture practices and balanced use of fish stocks; ensuring an appropriate balance between fishing and nature with appropriate allocation of responsibilities between government and industry; contributing to the primary objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP); and implementing measures with regard to the marine ecosystem. The Netherlands is also making efforts to ensure that, in the planning period for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), measures are taken for making fishing and aquaculture more sustainable.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

An SEA in the Netherlands is carried out according to the EU SEA Directive. The section dedicated to this process for the Policy Document on the North Sea, 2016 – 2021 above describes the approach taken in preparation of this document.

Taking account of environmental, economic, social and safety aspects

The Policy Document on the North Sea focuses on the use of marine space and the marine ecosystem. The safety aspects associated with these are described along with the designated uses in section 3 and 4 of the Policy Document.



Environmental aspects

The Policy Document accounts for environmental aspects in relation to the MSFD and the Dutch Marine Strategy, and sets a vision for a clean, healthy and productive sea. The objective is to reach (international) targets for the marine ecosystem and environmental quality by way of a comprehensive policy to create opportunities for ecosystem recovery, involving measures to protect marine biodiversity, create a network of marine protected areas, reduce pollution and encourage sustainable use of the sea. The ecosystem approach and the precautionary principle will be actively applied.



Economic Aspects

The Policy Document focuses on designating space for uses of national interest. Conflicts between renewable energy, sand extraction, and cables and pipelines are considered. Specific tasks are planned for management of wind energy and sand extraction.

The Policy Document designates an efficient use of space to meet the target set in the Dutch Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth to achieve 4,450 MW of offshore wind power generation by 2023. This means that facilities to generate an additional 3,500 MW of wind power must be installed, in addition to those already operating or currently under construction. The Cabinet added a strip of sea of up to two nautical miles to the Zuid-Holland and Noord-Holland areas within the 12-mile zone, allowing the area to be used more efficiently in terms of cost and space. The designation decision followed a partial revision of the National Water Plan 2016-2021.

The sand extraction strategy is aimed at achieving a more efficient and cost-effective management of the available sand reserves in this zone. Cost-effective sand extraction can be achieved by extracting sand as close as possible to where it is needed, on the coast or on land. Priority is given to the sand demand for the coming years and the sand extraction areas required to provide suitable sand for replenishment and elevation. The areas with the lowest extraction costs have the highest priority.

The aim is to combine cables and pipelines with existing infrastructure, and preferred routes are indicated in vision maps in the Policy Document.

Shipping, fishing and aquaculture, defence, tourism and recreation are also considered with their economic aspects in the plan.



Social aspects

The protection and management of the underwater cultural heritage is addressed by the Policy Document, with particular emphasis on the need for more information to be gathered on archaeological sites. The tourism and recreation sectors will be encouraged to set up partnerships with entrepreneurs, market institutions and research institutes. The Policy Document also encourages local and regional government authorities and other parties to address social aspects during spatial planning or other policy developments that could have an impact on marine and coastal recreation in the North Sea.



Safety aspects

- A design criterion has been developed for wind farms to regulate the distance from shipping lanes.
- When extracting surface minerals, flood risk management in a changing climate plays a significant role.
- Offshore platforms require a safety zone around them limiting vessel access and an obstacle-free zone for landing helicopters.
- For shipping there is a comprehensive routing system in place to ensure safety, however, the route through the Arctic Ocean is becoming increasingly more navigable, presenting new safety questions.
- The Ministry of Defence uses the North Sea to ensure that the armed forces are well trained and operational, enabling it to guarantee the country's safety.
- Safety is an important criterion when considering if recreational vessels should be allowed to transit through offshore wind farms.
- The increasing number and capacity of cruise ships will require extra efforts in emergency situations.

Cooperation with third countries

Norway and Iceland were also consulted during the Dutch MSP process. The Netherlands is a party to the OSPAR Convention.

MSP Review

The Policy Document on the North Sea 2009-2015 was evaluated whilst the drafting of the revised document for 2016-2021 was taking place. The current Policy Document will be reviewed and revised in line with the requirements of the MSP Directive as described in the section 'Monitoring and Review' for the Policy Document on the North Sea, 2016 – 2021.

The Netherlands is now in the 3rd cycle of MSP, preparing the programme for 2022-2027 which will be part of the new National Water Programme (NWP). The National Water Plan contains the North Sea Programme (the Programme Noordzee 2022-2027) under which the MSP will be incorporated by the Dutch Government. In addition, there is another ongoing process in the Netherlands that is of relevance to MSP in the Dutch EEZ: the North Sea Agreement that contains agreements between national government and stakeholders (including offshore wind industry, fishing industry, etc.) up to 2030 with a view to developing wind energy in the long term. The North Sea Agreement was presented to the Dutch Parliament House of Representatives in June 2020, and was endorsed by the Dutch Parliament in January 2021.

There will be three parts to the North Sea Programme: (1) Programme of measures for the MSFD; (2) Solutions to resolve the sectoral tensions; (3) Blue growth initiatives and supporting actions. The draft version including the SEA was ready in March 2021 and was forwarded to the Cabinet. Public consultation started in March 2021 for 6 months (until September 2021). After a full consultation process, the National Water Programme will be submitted to the Ministerial Council. The National Water Programme and the North Sea Programme will be completed by 2022. The North Sea Programme 2022 – 2027 is expected to be published and will enter into force in March 2022.

Sources

Consulted references

- Policy Document on the North Sea 2016-2021 including the Netherlands' Maritime Spatial Plan, appendix 2 to the National Water Plan 2016-2021, The Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment and The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, December 2015.
- Noordzeeloket, North Sea Policy in the National Water Program, <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/projects/north-sea-policy-in-the-national-water-plan/index.aspx>
- <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2021/03/18/4-ontwerp-programma-noordzee-2022-2027>
- <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/beleid/noordzee-2030/>
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- [Marine Strategy for the Netherlands 2012-2020 Part 1.
https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/Marine%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Netherlands%20part%20of%20the%20North%20Sea%202012-2020%2C%20Part%201_683.pdf](https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/Marine%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Netherlands%20part%20of%20the%20North%20Sea%202012-2020%2C%20Part%201_683.pdf)
- The Draft Marine Strategy for the Dutch part of the North Sea 2012-2020, Part 2, MSFD Monitoring Strategy. https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/The%20Draft%20Marine%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Dutch%20part%20of%20the%20North%20Sea%202012-2020%2C%20Part%202-%20MSFD%20Monitoring%20Programme%20-%20Summary_3188.pdf
- Marine Strategy for the Dutch Part of the North Sea 2012-2020 (part 3) MSFD Programme of Measures. https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/Images/NL%20Marine%20Strategy%20part%203%20English%20translation_5022.pdf
- “Sharing national MSP practices worldwide: The Netherlands” <https://www.mspglobal2030.org/events/online-seminar-on-sharing-national-msp-practices-worldwide-netherlands-en-fr-es/>.
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Relevant legislative acts

- [The National Water Act](#)
- [The National Spatial Planning Act](#)
- For all relevant laws, policies and regulations see: <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/projects/policies-and-regulations/>

Specific citations

ⁱ Source: http://www.unesco-ioc-marinesp.be/spatial_management_practice/the_netherlands

ⁱⁱ From North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda and page 41 of Policy Document