

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL OF PLANNING, HOUSING
AND NATURE**

WATER AND BIODIVERSITY DEPARTMENT

**SUB-DIRECTORATE FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF
COASTAL AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SEA
BASIN STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

Environmental report
submitted for consultation
Addendum on additional targets

February 2021

Eastern Channel - North Sea



Évaluer les Politiques et Innover
pour les Citoyens et les Espaces



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Introduction

The first two parts of the Strategic Coastline Document (SBSD), forming the maritime coastline strategy, were adopted by Interpretation Order in September 2019. This strategy defines maritime space planning, 8 vocation zones for the Eastern Channel - North Sea, and objectives to be achieved in each of these zones or for the entire coastline. The order of 11 July 2018 on the criteria and methods to be implemented for the preparation of the first two parts of the SBSB recalls that the environmental targets (mentioned in Article R. 219-7 of the Environment Code) are defined so that the pressures exerted by human activities on the marine environment are compatible with the achievement or maintenance of good environmental status of marine waters by the end of the current cycle of the "Marine Strategy" framework directive. This decree also recalls that the indicators associated with environmental targets include targets against which the achievement of the objectives is assessed.

At the time of the adoption of the coastline strategy, not all of these targets could be defined, due to a lack of data or the progress made in the consultations: 27 targets remained to be defined for the Eastern Channel and North Sea. Work was performed to evaluate and consolidate existing monitoring frameworks in order to define them at the time of the adoption of the action plan: consistency between these networks and those used for monitoring the objectives of the Water Framework Directive was sometimes reinforced on this occasion. At the end of the consultation, it will therefore be necessary to complete the seafront strategy with the additional targets defined during this work and to complete Annex 6b of the Eastern Channel - North Sea Seafront Strategy accordingly.

The "Explanatory note on the additional targets for the indicators of the environmental targets of the Eastern Channel - North Sea Strategy" produced in the context of the EA's referral for the operational part of the SBSB provides a summary explanation of the methods used to define each of the additional targets set and the nature of the work performed.

As the maritime coastline strategy has been the subject of an environmental assessment, dealing in particular with the potential environmental impacts in relation to the ambition of the targets set, it is necessary to complete it today with regard to the setting of additional targets. This is the purpose of this Addendum, which has two objectives:

- (1) analyse the ambition of the 27 additional targets defined after the adoption of the maritime coastline strategy. This analysis will be performed in this addendum in relation to the three sets of targets presented in the above-mentioned note, namely (i) the targets relating to the definition of strong protection zones, (ii) the targets relating to the considering of the new issues and new ambitions of the SBSDS in relation to the first cycle of the Marine Action Plan, and (iii) the targets established within the framework of the construction of the water development and management master plans (Seine-Normandie and Artois-Picardy) and of the consistency with the SBSDS;
- (2) conclude from this analysis on the possible modification of the SEA conclusions of the strategic strand that could result from the setting of these 27 additional targets.

Targets for the definition of Strong Protection Zones

Six targets are concerned by this first set. They concern the following environmental targets: D01-HB-OE3, D01-HB-OE4, D01-HB-OE6, D01-OM-OE06, D06-OE02 and D07-OE03. The majority of them are formulated in a qualitative way, along the lines of "Increasing trend in the area of habitat X in strong protection, with at least one proposed SPZ per SBSDS area where habitat X is in strong or major concern". The setting of these targets refers directly to the implementation of measure M003-NAT1B adopted in the framework of the first cycle of the APME, which provided for "completing the network of marine protected areas by setting up strong protections in sectors of remarkable marine biodiversity". The aim of this measure is to create a consistent, connected network of strong protection zones (SPZ) that is representative of the diversity of marine ecosystems on each coastline in mainland France. These strong protections will be instituted as a priority within existing marine protected areas.

In order to judge the ambition of the targets proposed by the Eastern Channel - North Sea coastline, it is therefore necessary to go back to the implementation of measure M003-NAT1B. The latter was the subject of a national framework note in June 2018 proposing the following steps for its implementation:

- Step 1: Inventory of existing strong protections in the MPA network;
- Step 2: Analysis of consistency of the current network of strong protections in MPAs;
- Step 3: Identification of sectors and issues requiring a higher level of protection to strengthen the network
- Step 4: association and then consultation of the CMFs on the additions to be made to the network of strong protections by 2030 and establishment of the corresponding target as a proportion of the EEZ in strong protections in mainland France and intermediate targets for 2021 and 2026
- Step 5: installation of strong protection on the coastlines

As these different stages are planned to be implemented by the end of 2019, they should have made it possible to set quantitative targets for the proportions of habitats at stake located in the SPZ (for example: 10% of the area of habitat X located in the SPZ). However, the process has been delayed, particularly in the early stages, and has not allowed the definition of the new SPZ to be achieved within the timetable for setting the additional targets of the Maritime Strategy. In a national working group, it was therefore decided on 13 March 2020 to change the wording of the targets initially envisaged, as described in this extract from the national working group's decision statement:

"In order to reflect the different levels of progress and ambition of the coastlines, the following general wording is proposed:

"Increase [the proportion] of the area of [name of habitat] in strong protection [in each of the following areas [, with at least one area per high or major stake sector]: list of potential SPZs relevant to this habitat]*

** Naming of an area intended to host a SPZ, the precise perimeter of which will be defined after local consultations. »*

This wording may be adapted for each indicator, with or without the bracketed words. This wording thus provides for an increase in the coverage of strong protection, with, if possible, a list of potential SPZs in which this habitat will be protected, and, if possible, a criterion of representativeness of strong or major issues.

Note that in some cases, more specific targets are proposed, in the following form: "X% of the known area of habitat X is located in a strong protection zone"

With regard to the Eastern Channel - North Sea coastline in particular, the following points should be noted in relation to this implementation process, which is common to all coastlines

- that 2 existing and 16 potential SPZs could be defined;
- that these SPZs consider the principle of "multi-stakeholder" SPZs, i.e., that all ecological issues identified as strong or major have been considered in the analysis;
- that these SPZs are only coastal, and therefore do not cover the ecological issues of the open sea;
- that one of the six targets in this first set is quantitative, that of D01- HB-OE04 (100% of the bioconstructions of the species *Sabellaria alveolata* in the "littoral de Champeaux" area located in the SPZ).

In conclusion, with regard to the ambition of this first set of targets, it is regrettable that in most cases a quantitative target has been abandoned in favour of an "upward trend" associated with a list of "potential" MPAs whose actual surface area has yet to be defined (in fact, a potential MPA within a larger MPA gives no indication of the surface area that will be retained at the end of the consultation processes that have yet to be conducted). The designation of a list of new protected areas to be created is nevertheless a step forward, even if it is as much a matter of the national protected areas strategy as of the coastline maritime strategy.

As far as the Eastern Channel - North Sea coastline is concerned, although the relatively large number of proposed potential SPZs offers a good consideration of coastal issues, this exclusively coastal situation may increase the difficulty of classifying large areas. Without prejudging the future of the designation process, it is likely to be difficult to meet the Protected Areas Strategy's 'framework' target of 10% of the area to be protected by 2021.

This objective is global for all French waters and therefore does not apply to each coastline. Nevertheless, the OFB sets a benchmark of 5% in mainland France, with a minimum of 3% on each coastline.

Targets for addressing the new challenges and ambitions of the SBSD

Twelve targets are covered by this second set. They concern the following environmental targets: D01-HB-OE5, D01-HB-OE6, D01-OM-OE01, D01-OM-OE04, D01-OM-OE05, D06-OE01, D08-OE04 and D11-OE01 and refer to four different topics which we will deal with in turn: (1) specific habitats (for the first two objectives), (2) sea birds (for the next three), (3) the integrity of the seabed and in particular artificialization (for D06-OE01) and (4) two other anthropogenic pressures (docking areas and noise).

1. SPECIFIC HABITATS

The three targets concern the avoidance or reduction of physical disturbance to eelgrass beds and subtidal and circalittoral sedimentary habitats, particularly in the 3-mile zone, which are important issues.

On the NMW coast, two of these three targets are quantitative, for example "100% of the known eelgrass area is off limits to mooring". The third is more of a qualitative nature "downward trend".

This first group of targets can be considered ambitious in view of the areas occupied by these habitats on the coast, their fundamental ecological functions, their high sensitivity to anthropogenic pressures (anchoring, troll fishing) and the dependence of certain uses on these habitats (coarse sands in particular).

2. SEA BIRDS

The four targets concerned are the reduction of incidental catches of sea birds, the reduction of the pressure exerted by certain introduced and domesticated species on sea bird breeding sites and the maintenance/restoration of functional sea bird habitats in coastal wetlands.

On the Eastern Channel - North Sea front, two of these four targets are quantitative and the other two are qualitative, notably because certain elements of knowledge remain to be established (map of functional sites or reference value / state 0).

In addition to their partially quantitative nature, the setting of these targets was based on consultation with the Groupement d'Intérêt Scientifique Oiseaux Marins (GISOM), which also undertook to monitor the indicators associated with these targets. This second group of targets can therefore also be considered to be rather ambitiously defined.

3. ARTIFICIALIZATION

The three targets concerned are the average rate of artificialization of the foreshore (structures and facilities in the water) and the coastal bottom (structures and facilities in the water and underwater between 0 and 20 metres).

On the Eastern Channel - North Sea side, these three targets are "semi-quantitative", i.e., they are worded as follows: "Trend towards a decrease in the average rate of artificialization compared to the average reference rate evaluated at x% for Eastern Channel - North Sea over 6 years".

The characterisation of a reference rate of artificialization was therefore essential to establish these targets. This rate was established by CEREMA for the linear and foreshore areas only (i.e., for indicators 1 and 2) and for the period 2002-2014, within the framework of a report entitled "artificialization of coastal and littoral marine environments, Methods for determining indicators 1 and 2" (CEREMA, 2021), which can be found in the appendix to the explanatory note mentioned in the introduction.

From both a methodological and regulatory point of view, the production of this reference value represents a considerable advance. Indeed:

- methodologically, this calculation raises many challenges such as (1) considering only the physical losses (linear or surface of the structures) or also the physical disturbances generated by the structures, or (2) the need to adapt to the evolutions of the reference land/sea boundary, currently being redefined. These challenges raise in particular strong issues of consistency between the calculation performed by CEREMA and other existing calculations (within the framework of the coastline management strategy for example);
- from a regulatory point of view, the EO indicators of the MSCD and their targets are subject to a compatibility obligation for authorisations at sea, which increases the requirement in terms of the reliability of the results and requires that they can be converted into absolute values in an accurate manner to facilitate the processing of authorisations.

The setting of semi-quantitative targets can therefore be considered to be a real step forward, which has moreover been the subject of much debate and required many explanations of the study performed by CEREMA and its method. However, the fact that no quantified target for reducing the rate of artificialization has been set for this cycle poses a certain risk to achieving the national objective of "zero net artificialization by 2030" at the end of the next cycle. Furthermore, the implementation and monitoring of these targets remains a challenge in terms of support for the instructing services.

4. OTHER ANTHROPOGENIC PRESSURES

The two targets concerned by this fourth set are, on the one hand, the number of ports equipped with docking areas with an effluent treatment system and, on the other hand, the spatial extent of events with a high level of noise related to impulsive emissions.

The first target is of a qualitative nature "upward trend" and the second is not yet fixed as work is still in progress. It is therefore difficult to comment on the ambition of these two targets, although the former appears modest.

Targets established in the framework of the SDAGE construction

Eight targets are covered by this third set. They concern the following environmental targets: D05-OE01, D05-OE02, D07-OE03, D08-OE07 and D09-OE01. Two subsets can be distinguished within these eight targets:

- on the one hand, the relative targets of D5 (Eutrophication), which take the form of % of streams, rivers and watercourses leading to eutrophied marine areas whose nitrate/phosphate concentrations are compatible with the GES threshold values for the nutrients criterion (mainly with regard to the chlorophyll a criterion);
- on the other hand, the targets relating to D7, D8 and D9 (hydrographic conditions and contaminants), which concern obstacles that cannot be removed in rivers (D7), the quality of sediments and coastal water bodies (D8) and the microbiological quality of coastal waters (D9).

Before commenting on the value of these targets, let us first recall the strong link between SDAGE and SBSO. Indeed, by virtue of IX of Article L. 212-1 of the Environment Code, the SDAGE must be compatible or made compatible with the environmental targets defined in the MAPs, at the time of its periodic update provided for in IV of Article L. 212-2. Conversely, the APME includes environmental targets and associated indicators for achieving good environmental status of marine waters, which are compatible or made compatible with the SDAGE (Article L. 219-9 of the Environment Code). In accordance with the provisions mentioned in IX of Article L. 212-1 and insofar as many of the pressures on marine ecosystems are generated on land, the environmental targets of the SBSOs concerning these pressures on land or in relation to water policy define new results to be achieved within the framework of the SDAGEs currently being drawn up for the third management cycle 2022-2027. As a result, the SDAGEs and WFD MoPs must define the measures contributing to the achievement of these results, within the limits of their legal scope, unless concessions to the achievement of these objectives are integrated into the strategic documents of the coastlines.

Within the framework of this necessary coordination, the setting of targets for this third set was the subject of several national working groups involving the departments responsible for drawing up the SBSOs (DIRMs), SDAGEs (Water Agencies) or both (basin DREALs). In addition, in order to contribute to the setting of eutrophication targets, a modelling study on the restoration of the GES of coastal waters by reducing the flow of nutrients from rivers has been entrusted to IFREMER by the DEB. As a result of the methodological limitations of this study, it was not used to set river-by-river abatement levels, and the targets finally adopted were instead a global percent of rivers with a concentration compatible with the GES (see above).

With regard to the Eastern Channel - North Sea coastline in particular:

- half of the targets relating to D5 are well below 100%, which "mechanically" leads to associated concessions since only a proportion of 100% is compatible with achieving the GES. Of the four targets concerned, three relate to nitrate flows;
- the target for D7 is set quantitatively, with a value of 100% of the barriers whose impacts on hydrographic conditions are or will be minimised in the Artois Picardy basin;
- the two targets relating to D8 are, for one of them, not defined (the associated indicator therefore having candidate status and will not be reported to the EC

for this cycle), and for the other well below 100% of the coastal water bodies in good chemical status (for the Seine Normandy basin), which also justifies a concession;

- finally, the target relating to D9 is quantitative in nature and presents a good level of prevention since it sets the number of monitoring points showing a deterioration in microbiological quality at 0.

In total, with concessions necessary for three objectives (D5 and D8), the targets set appear to be unambitious overall. They illustrate in particular the recurrent difficulty in reducing diffuse pollution "on land", in particular of agricultural origin, since it is nitrate flows that are the most concerning. Insofar as this pollution then affects the quality of the marine environment, it also illustrates the difficulty of the LSFs in 'influencing' the objectives of the SDAGEs to a great extent, despite the efforts made in this respect and mentioned above. The fact that the SDAGEs were drawn up earlier and that the timetable for drawing up the two documents is different no doubt partly explains this result, on which progress will have to be made in the next cycles.

Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, it can be considered that about ten additional targets have been defined in a rather ambitious way (i.e., a little less than 40%), the others having a medium to low level of ambition.

As the environmental assessment of the coastline maritime strategy concluded that a significant proportion of environmental targets had targets with modest ambition, the setting of additional targets discussed in this addendum does not appear likely to significantly alter the conclusions of that assessment.