



Risk-based Approaches to Good Environmental Status (RAGES) is a two-year, €800k project, funded by DG Environment to support implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The project is led by MaREI -SFI research centre at University College Cork. The project began in January 2019 and comprises a consortium of partners from Ireland (UCC and DHPLG), France (MTES and INERIS), Spain (DGSCM-SGPM and IEO, UPV) and Portugal (DRAM, DGRM, ARDITI, MARE FCUL, IPMA and DRM), these include the MSFD competent authorities from each country.

**This policy brief highlights the recommendations for regional implementation of Risk-Based Management.**

**More information on the project can be found at [www.msfd.eu/rages](http://www.msfd.eu/rages)**

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# Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Achieving Good Environmental Status  
in the North East Atlantic

**Recommendations for  
regional implementation of a  
Risk-Based Approach to MSFD**



# What is the Marine Strategy Framework Directive?

Clean Healthy and Productive Seas



## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

The directive sets out 11 qualitative descriptors of environmental status for which EU Member States must achieve or maintain good environmental status. These descriptors include commitments to high profile issues such as biodiversity, management of marine litter and sustainable fisheries as well as more technical aspects of marine environmental health like food web structures and alterations to hydrography.

## The Challenge

In the first cycle of implementation, the European Commission found that many aspects of implementation of the MSFD were inadequate, adequate or partially adequate. In recognition of the fact that some Member States have very large marine territories and relatively little marine data the Commission made provisions for Risk-Based Approaches (RBA) to Good Environmental Status (GES). To facilitate regional harmonisation of the new RBA, the RAGES project developed a standard methodology for risk-based management in MSFD. The methodology was applied to two descriptors, Descriptor 2- Non-Indigenous species and Descriptor 11 - Underwater noise.

## ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is coordinated centrally through a Common Implementation Strategy (CIS). Every six years Member States must:

- Assess marine environmental quality.
- Put in place monitoring programmes.
- Design and implement programmes of measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

The MSFD applies to waters under Member State jurisdiction. It recognizes that the marine territories form continuous ecosystems where the activities in the marine waters of one Member State may affect the environmental state in another. The MSFD obliges countries to cooperate across regions and subregions. This is facilitated by the existence of the regional seas conventions, in the North East Atlantic this is the OSLO Paris Commission (OSPAR).

## Data gathering, archiving and sharing

Centralized efforts providing data on human activities in the marine environment (e.g. EMODnet, Copernicus) have an invaluable role to play in the regional harmonization of MSFD implementation. Opportunities to add value and maximise the potential for proxy datasets to be adapted for estimation of pressures should be explored.

Accessibility of MS reporting data should be improved. The cyclical reviews of MS reporting may provide an opportunity to archive MSFD implementation data centrally to improve accessibility.

Existing databases (e.g. EASIN) that provide data to MSFD should regularly updated and maintained.

## Expert Approaches

Expert judgement approaches have the potential to greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regional cooperation and national implementation. Structures and processes to enable the participation of experts in focused expert judgement workshops should be developed by the Commission and Member States.

The first steps towards regional harmonisation of risk-based approaches to MSFD are to:

- Establish a Task Group under the Marine Strategy Coordination Group
- Prioritise MSFD descriptors
- Agree common methodologies
- Establish expert networks
- Implement joint workshops