

MEETING DOCUMENT

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Note from the chair of the Task Group Monitoring and Assessment

In the early days of TMAP the concept asked for an integrated ecosystem monitoring approach. The TMAP viewed the Wadden Sea as an ecological entity, but the issues of concern also included coastal inhabitants and their activities. This integrated monitoring approach has faded over the decades ever since. When TG-MA started its work in 2019, the ambition was to reinvigorate this approach, develop a modernized and fit-for-purpose TMAP which covered the requirements of new monitoring programs at EU-level, and was to consider new, emerging issues of concern. New pressures and impacts such as pollutants, micro-plastics, non-native species and climate change were listed as relevant and to come under the umbrella of TMAP. The work of TG-MA was set to increase the value of the TMAP and its products to the users and stakeholders. It was recognized that improving the long-neglected handling of the treasure of the TMAP data was indispensable in order to make the TMAP information widely recognizable and usable, for instance for the public-at-large or schools. Hand-in-hand with this went developing the plan for revamping and adapting the QSR production process. Reaching this ambitious goal would require intensive work in TG-MA but in EG-Data as well. Due to a late start in 2019, concrete steps towards producing an overview of programs, methods and data sources could only be initiated by late 2019 and early 2020. The first milestone was a joint meeting of TG-MA and EG-Data which, however revealed that some regions had severe reservations due to their data policies.

In addition, the temporary exit of one of the main actors in early 2020 made the work-plan decided by TG-MA obsolete and precluded a structured process. TG-MA had no initial or continuous access to program and data experts and instead focused on single issues such as the QSR production and elaborating an overview of programs, agencies-in-charge, and data sources under the TMAP umbrella. This document filled an important gap. The Covid-19 pandemic then was the final straw for any plan B. Although online meetings proved to be efficient and did the trick for at least part of the work, thematic expert meetings for e.g. new program elements and data handling and exchange issues turned out to be challenging. In spite of these shortcomings, TG-MA managed to produce quite a few of its deliverables, in addition to the program and

data sources overview as an indispensable source for the further work. Further, the SIMP received input in terms of proxy parameters for the OUV, key values and assessments. During the final year of TG-MA, EG-Data has found commonalities and new grounds for cooperation in the near future. The work will also feed into developing the new and streamlined QSR production process. The 2022 QSR includes nine thematic reports although it stays well below the initial ambition of TG-MA in 2019 to also include previews of new monitoring programs and an outlook of how climate change could come under the TMAP umbrella in the future. The still lacking climate-change-oriented approach towards a common program is critical as any assessment must rely on long-term data sets, although many of the TMAP parameters can be utilized in that context. What is still left open are the issue of monitoring methods and their comparability for some parameters, and of monitoring of human activities in the regions to be included in the common package (monitoring socio-economy).

There are lessons learned from the work of TG-MA since 2019. Building a modernized QSR production process requires intensive communication and regular exchange between the representatives of the regions in TG-MA and the TMAP program experts engaged in the QSR production and monitoring. Building regional networks of program experts, the integration and communication of which should be in the hands of TMAP coordinators in order to significantly increase competence. Focal points do not appear suitable to assume this responsibility. Increasing the visibility of TMAP and its products asks for new approaches and disciplines beyond the remits of TG-MA. Web-based technologies for QSR and data visualization and assessments have to be guided by the needs of the users: scientists, locals, stakeholders, administrators and decision makers, and last but not least the public at large. Building awareness may be the foundation for a better protection of the World Heritage area Wadden Sea where so many interests have to be mediated with the legitimate uses.

