



**Coherent & Cross-compliant Ocean Governance for
Delivering the EU Green Deal for European Seas**

Navigating coherence in EU marine policies

**Froukje Maria Platjouw (Norwegian Institute for Water Research, Oslo)
Ben Boteler (Research Institute for Sustainability, Potsdam)**

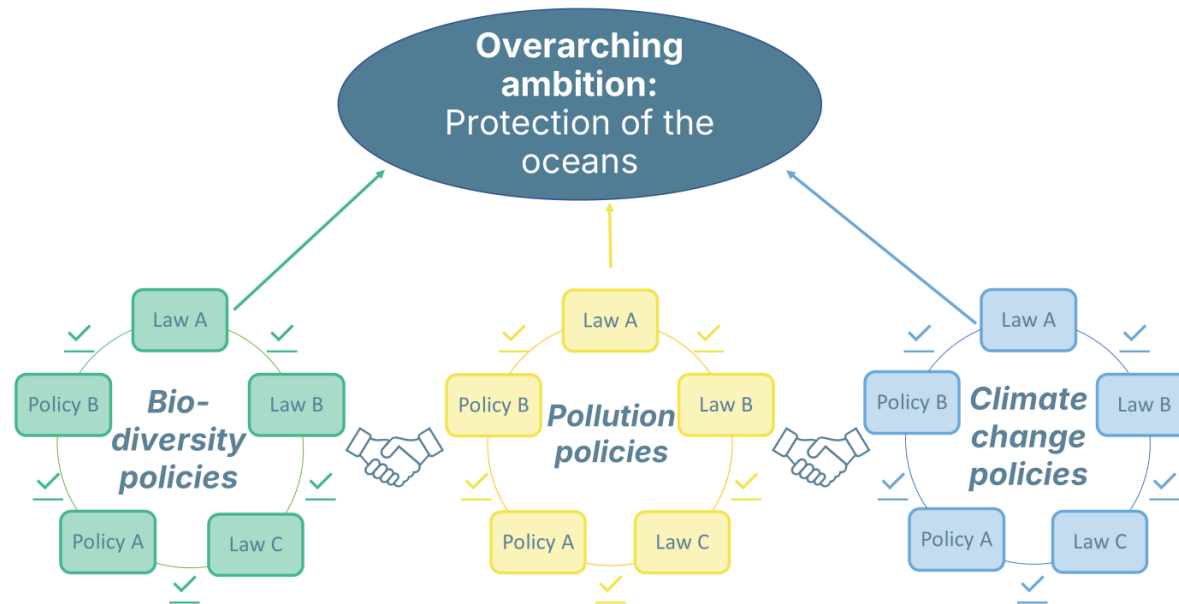
European Marine Board, 04 December 2025



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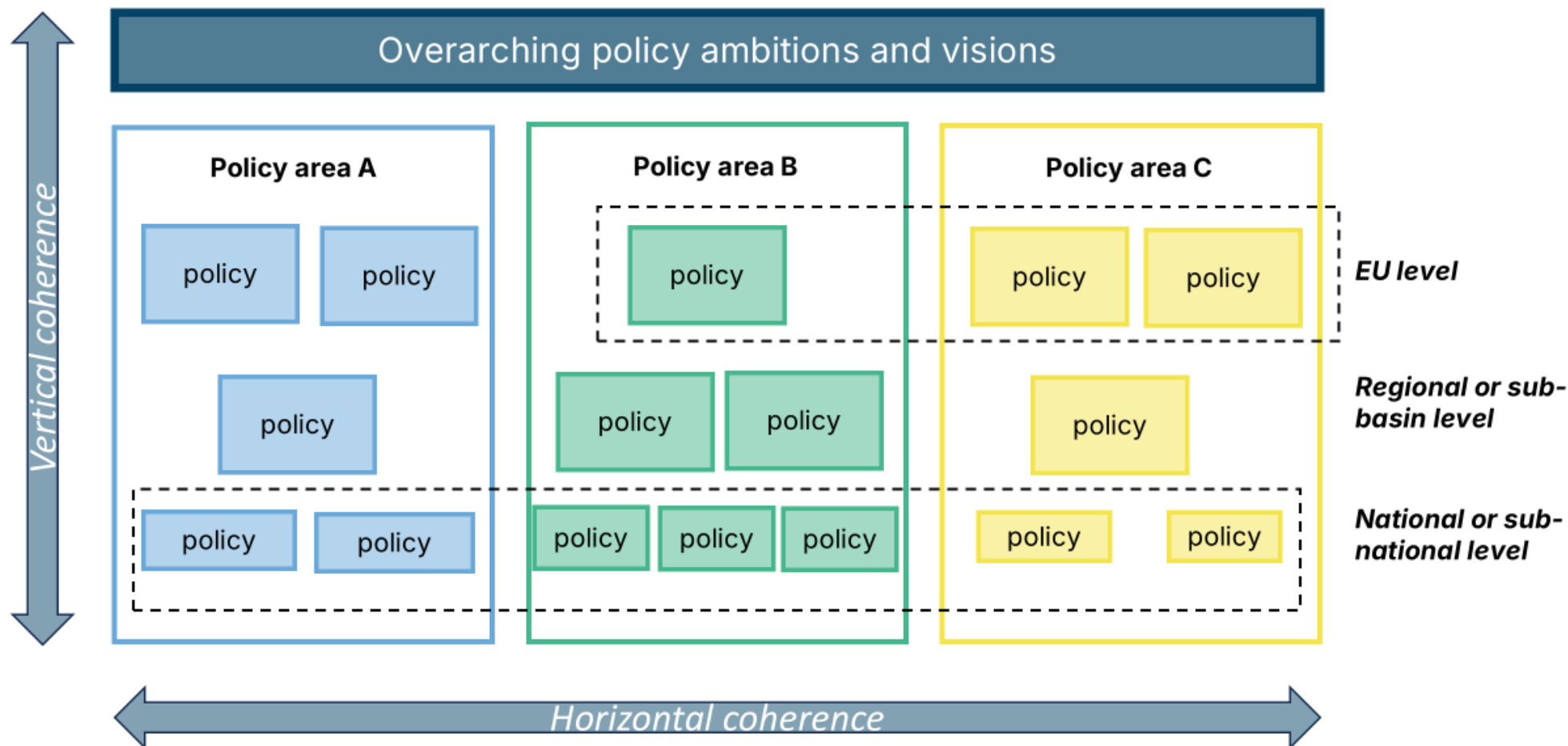
Welcome

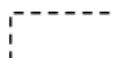
❖ What is happening to our oceans?



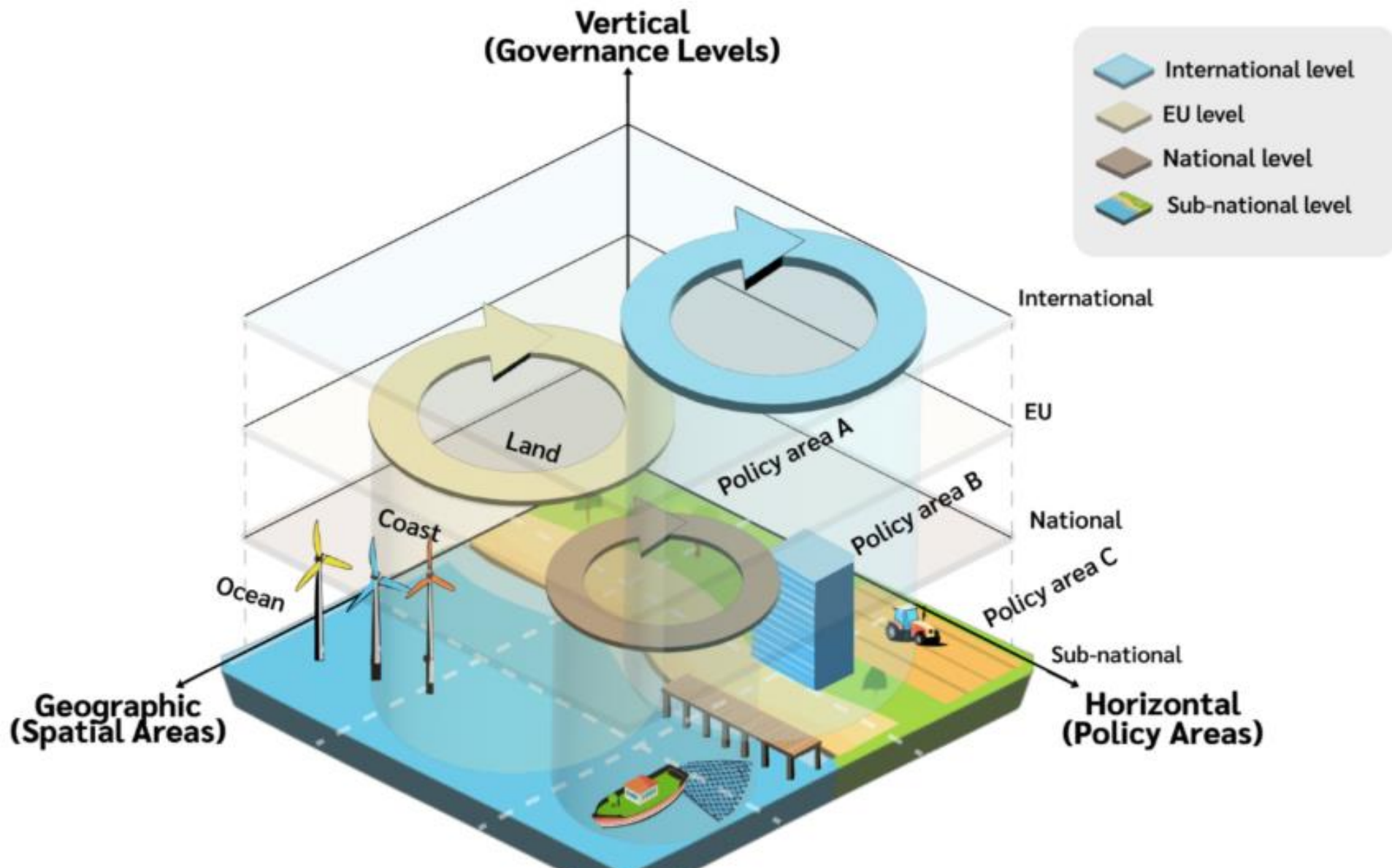
- ❖ Why do we need policy coherence?
- ❖ What is policy coherence?
- ❖ From the Green Deal to the Oceans Pact

Dimensions of coherence



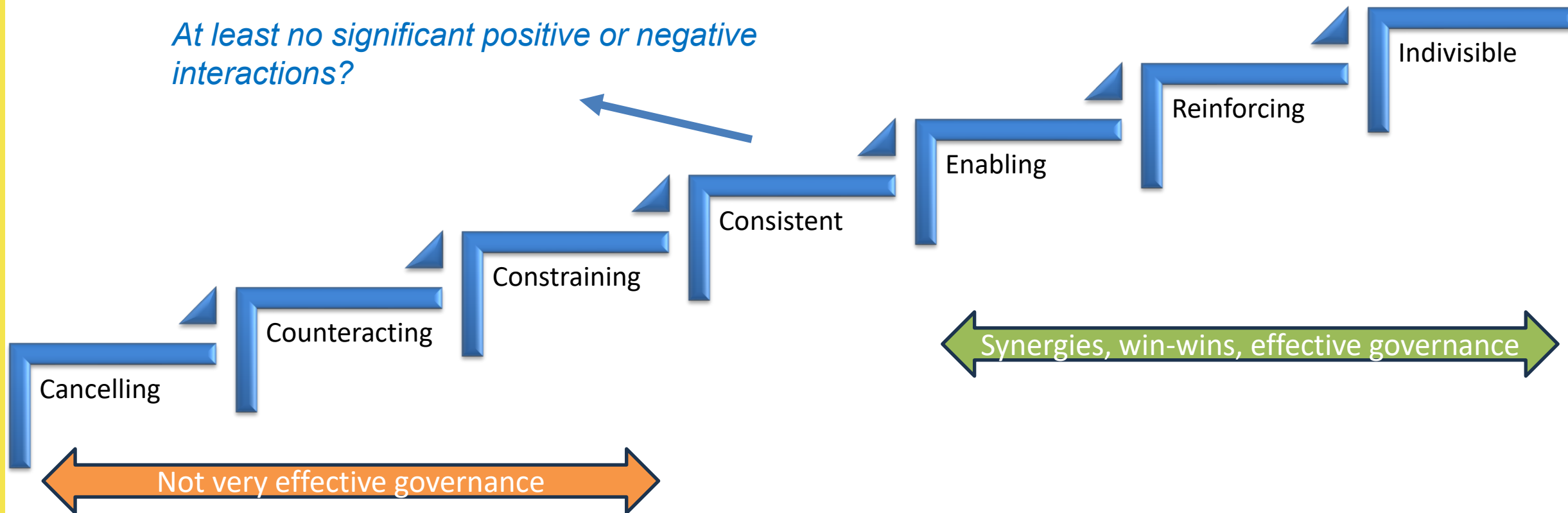
 = Horizontal coherence across policies within one or multiple policy areas

Dimensions of coherence



Saskia Trubbach et al,
2026, Archetypical
patterns of barriers and
enablers to policy
coherence in European
marine and coastal
governance: A
systematic review
(under review)

What level of policy coherence do we need/want?



(Scale adjusted from M. Nilsson et al 2016)

Purpose of the Policy Coherence Framework

Why did we develop this?

- Guidance from the Better Regulation is quite generic, so it can fit many different policy areas
- In practice, it seems that policy coherence is assessed in many different ways and levels of depth
- Potential for more efficient and harmonized assessments, if the guidance is more detailed and 'guiding' 😊
- Proper coherent policies enable effectiveness, and the achievement of our policy ambitions!

Handbook on Policy Coherence

An easy guide to assess and understand policy coherence



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Policy Coherence Handbook

Handbook on Policy Coherence

An easy guide to assess and understand policy coherence

[Read more about this handbook](#)



THE CONTEXT

What is policy coherence?

A brief introduction to policy coherence and why it is important



How to structure a policy coherence assessment?

A brief overview of how to structure a policy coherence assessment using the four-tiered methodological approach



THE FRAMEWORK

Assessing the level of policy coherence

A practical guide to assess the level of policy coherence within and between policies



Understanding reasons for policy (in)coherence

A practical guide to understand the explanatory factors behind policy (in)coherence



BONUS MATERIAL

Better regulation guidelines and tools

Assessing policy coherence following the Better Regulation guidelines and tools



Quick guide - The policy coherence framework

Once you have collected all the relevant information and data for the targeted policies, you need to start analyzing the information. The CrossGov Policy Coherence Framework is a methodological framework for assessing and understanding policy coherence.

The framework consists of two parts:

Part A - Assessing the level of policy coherence

Part B - Explanatory factors (understanding what factors cause policy (in)coherence)

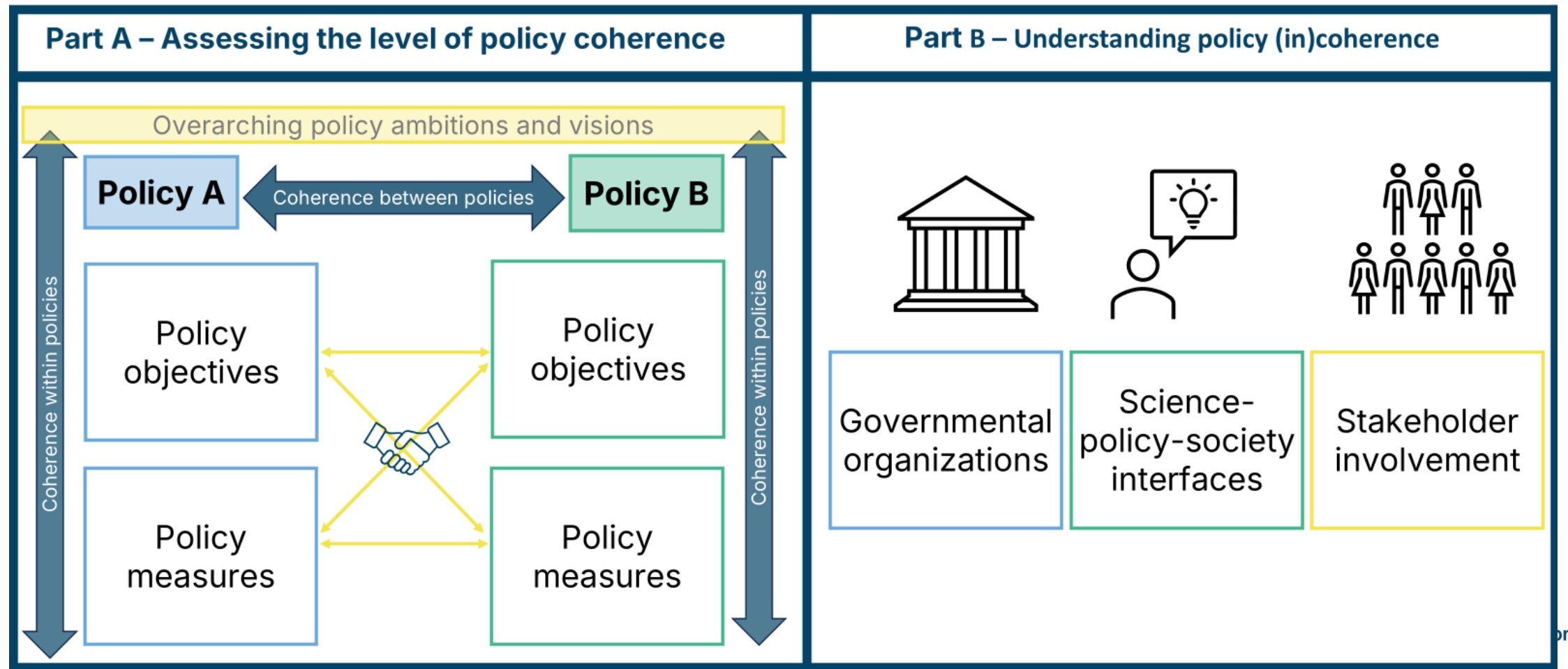
[The policy coherence framework](#)

Downloadable options

<https://www.policycoherencehandbook.eu/>

A comprehensive, yet 'neutral', framework...

The policy coherence framework



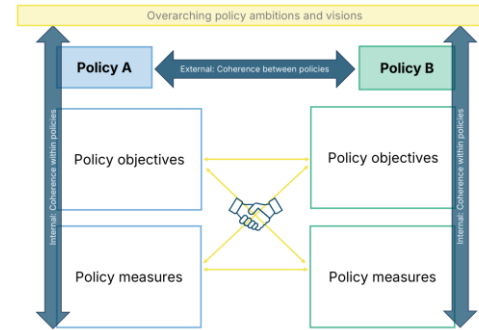
What sort of guiding questions?

For objectives:

- *If the policy has multiple objectives, are these sufficiently aligned?*
 - a. **substantively**, i.e. in terms of subject matter?
 - b. **geographically**, i.e. in terms of spatial application?
 - c. **'temporally'**, i.e. in terms of timeframes for their achievement

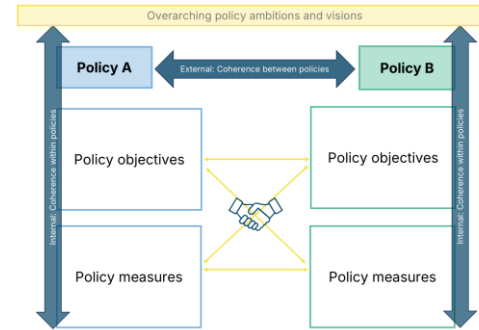
- *Do all the objectives within the policy have the same legal status and power to put into effect action?*
 - a. Are there differences in **how legally binding** different objectives are? Are there differences in the enforcement opportunities they encompass?
 - b. Do the various objectives entail the **same requirements for authorities to take action**? Compare, for example, whether the authorities are expected to accomplish the objectives (=obligation of results), or are only obliged to make sufficient efforts to work towards them (=obligations of best effort)?
 - c. Does the policy allow for **exemptions** from certain objectives? How does the use of these exemptions affect the level of coherence within the policy?
 - d. Are the policy objectives **cross-referencing** to each other?

Coherence between policies



Also a focus on *measures*

Coherence between policies



NB: An assessment of measures may reveal that there are ‘strong’ measures to support some objectives, and ‘weak’ measures to support others

For measures:

- **Do all the measures collectively contribute to achieving all policy objectives or are some measures only relevant for achieving specific subsets of objectives?**
 - a. If the measures support different objectives, consider whether certain measures are more easily realizable than others, for instance due to available resources and budgets?
 - b. How do the measures differ in terms of legal status and enforcement?
- Etc.....

Example: Offshore Wind Energy and Biodiversity



Ambitious **Green Deal goals** for biodiversity protection and the production of offshore renewable energy!

➤ **But some challenges:**

- Offshore wind installations can **disrupt the lifecycles** of fish and other marine species
- Wind turbine parks present considerable **spatial needs**, and these are typically in shallow banks that are also biodiversity hotspots
- Still **lack of knowledge** on marine biodiversity

Are the policy landscapes and governance arrangements sufficiently coherent and integrated?

Protection of marine biodiversity



Habitats and Birds
Directives



Marine Strategy
Framework Directive

*Prohibition to locate
renewable energy
projects in Natura
2000 areas*

*Due to size and impact,
projects may conflict with Sea
Floor Integrity requirement (as
part of GES)*



Are the Nature Directives and MSFD strong enough to protect the marine environment from offshore wind and other pressures?

Co-location, promoting economic growth

*MSP promoting economic growth in the
maritime sector, such as offshore wind (art. 5)*



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Fostering renewable energy

Climate Law



Renewable Energy
Directive III

*RED projects automatically fulfill the
criteria of overriding public interest
(art6.4 HD), so exempted from
prohibition (RED III, art. 16.f)*



Are biodiversity concerns integrated well enough into climate and energy policies?



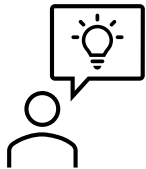
Maritime Spatial Planning Directive

Understanding policy (in)coherence (Part B of the framework)



Governmental
organizations

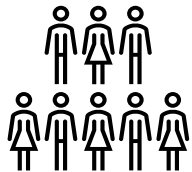
The interactions between public actors and authorities affect the coherent design and implementation of policies.



Science-
policy-society
interfaces

The production, transfer and utilization of data and knowledge affects coherence

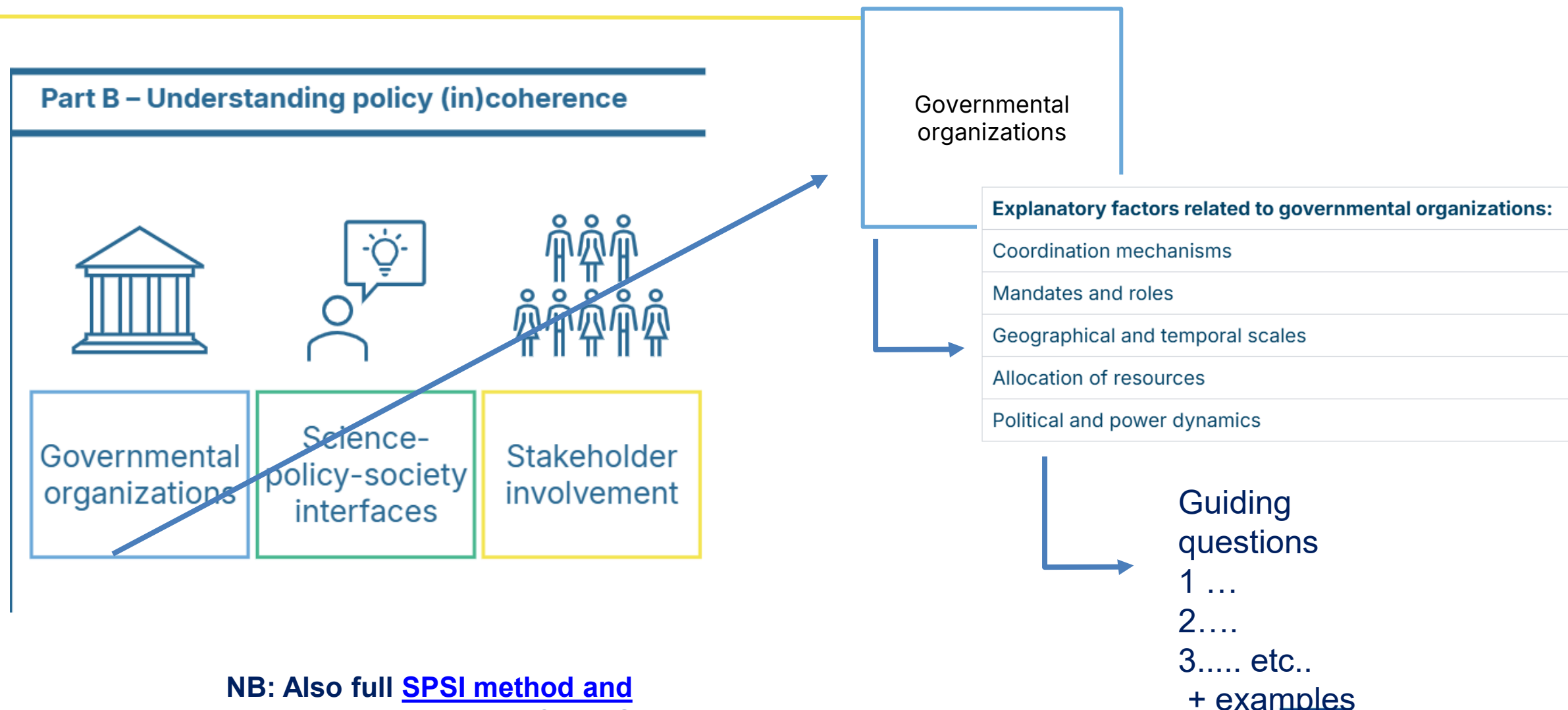
NB: Also full [SPSI method and blueprint](#) developed in CrossGov!



Stakeholder
involvement

How stakeholders affect policy- and decision-making

Understanding policy (in)coherence



NB: Also full [SPSI method and blueprint](#) developed in CrossGov!

A deeper dive into Offshore Wind and Biodiversity



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**Coherent & Cross-compliant Ocean Governance for
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Balancing offshore wind energy expansion and biodiversity protection in the North Sea

Ben Boteler^a, Maaïke Knol-Kauffman^b, Nikolaos Giannopoulos^c, Cristian Passarello^a

^aResearch Institute for Sustainability, ^bNorwegian Institute for Water Research, ^cUtrecht University

One Ocean Science Conference

EMB 04 December 2026



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Introduction

- **The North Sea context:** 300 GW offshore wind by 2050
- **Key question:** *How coherent are national governance frameworks in aligning energy and biodiversity goals?*
- **Approach:** Comparative analysis of Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway using the [CrossGov policy coherence framework](#)



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Methodology

- Framework examines policy objectives, instruments, and explanatory factors
- Three dimensions: governmental organizations, stakeholder involvement, SPSI processes
- Methods: detailed policy/legal review plus 14 semi-structured interviews
- Triangulation and validation workshops to ensure reliable findings

Germany: Structured but siloed

Current status & plans

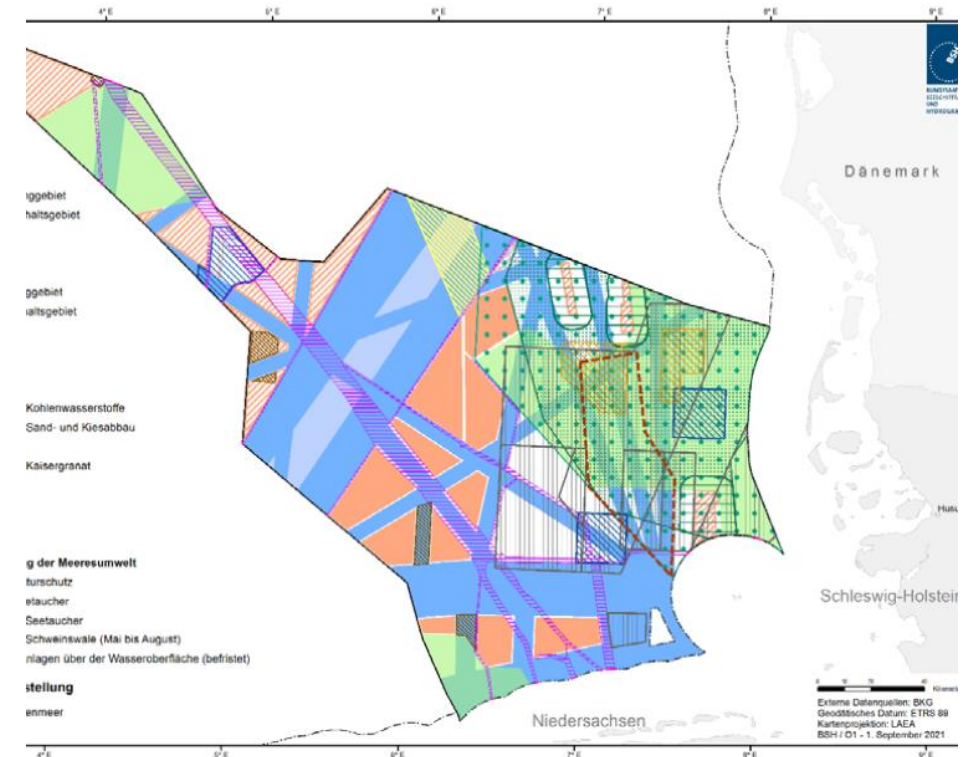
- 9.2 GW installed; 30 GW by 2030, 70 GW by 2045

Key characteristics

- Offshore Wind Energy Act, Site Development Plan
- Maritime Spatial Planning; SEAs conducted at basin level
- “Overriding public interest”
- All EEZ space allocated; high spatial competition

Key takeaways

- Institutional silos
- SEAs lack depth on cumulative impacts; inconsistent sensitivity mapping
- Needs stronger integration of ecological data and stakeholder input



Source: [Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, 2021.](#)

The Netherlands: Adaptive and inclusive

Current status & plans

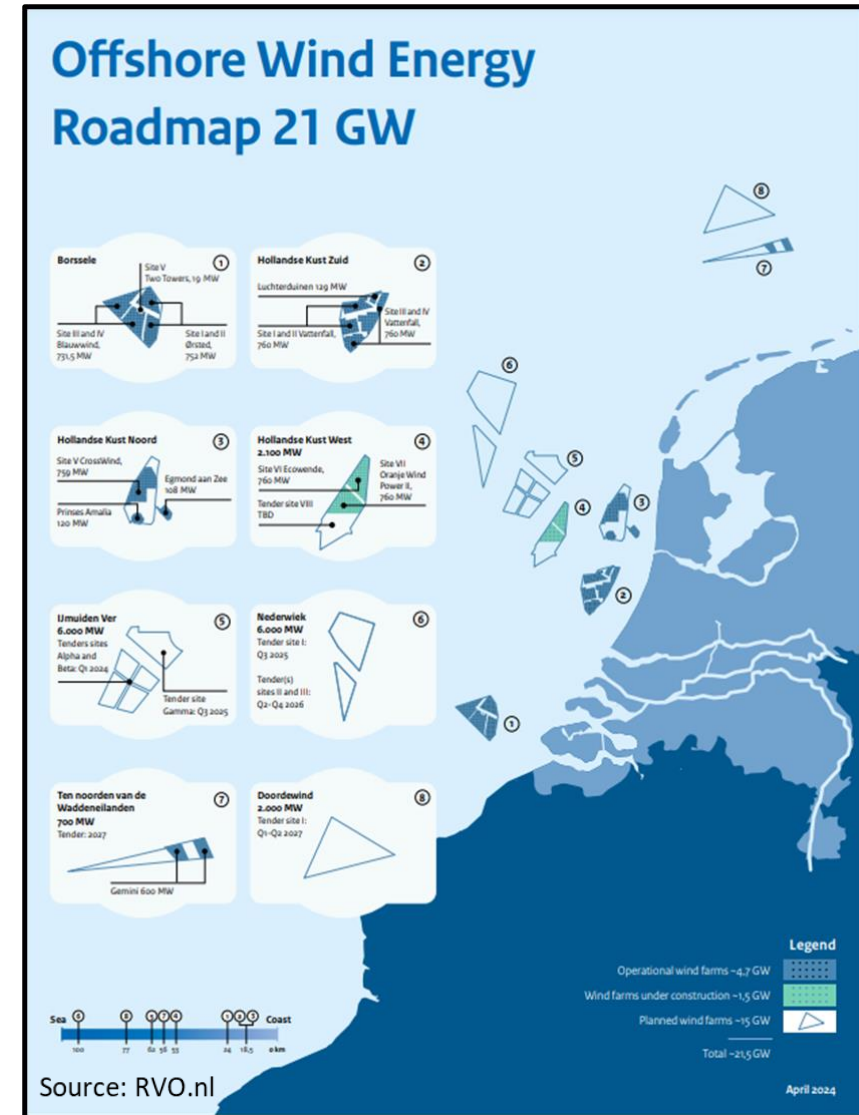
- 4.7 GW installed; target: 21 GW by 2032, 70 GW by 2050
- Ongoing MSP revision to accommodate expansion

Key characteristics

- Integrated governance
- One-stop-shop permitting
- Non-price ecological tender criteria and nature-inclusive design

Key takeaways

- Cumulative impact assessments (KEC) still evolving
- Balancing rapid expansion within ecological limits is challenging



Norway: Emerging and cautious

Areas identified for offshore wind. In green: particularly valuable and vulnerable areas

Source: kart.kystverket.no

Current status & plans

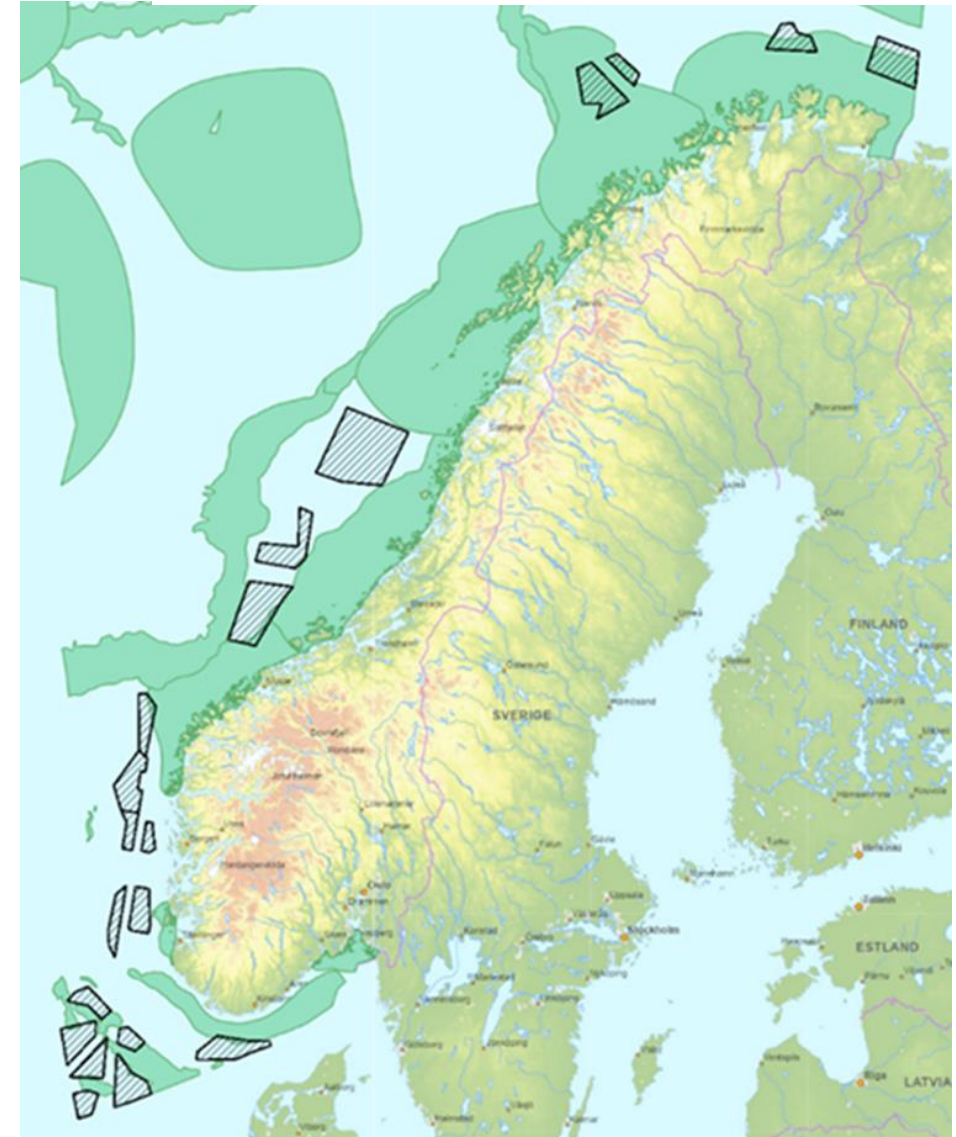
- <0.1 GW installed; 30 GW target by 2040
- 20 areas identified, focus on floating

Key characteristics

- SEAs are comprehensive, early-stage, and potentially impactful
- No MSP, but ecosystem-based management plans

Key takeaways

- Environmental authorities have limited influence
- No legal protection beyond 12 nm (new law proposed)



Reflections & ways forward

Best practices

- NL: Ecological tender criteria, stakeholder platforms
- DE: Long-term planning clarity, structured approach
- NO: Knowledge-based approach - early-stage SEAs and ecosystem-based plans

(Obstacles to) policy coherence?

- SEAs often too late to inform or adapt decisions
- REDIII may weaken safeguards via fast-tracking
- Regional coordination is key for managing cumulative impacts and sharing data and infrastructure – the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative is promising



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