JUNE 30, 2024

ADOPTION STATEMENT & MONITORING PROGRAMME

FOR THE SEA OF MALTA'S PORE

THE ENERGY & WATER AGENCY

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND REGENERATION OF THE GRAND HARBOUR

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Summary of the SEA Process 2
SEA Adoption Statement 3
Addressing Regulation 10(1)(b) of S.L. 549.61 3
Integration of environmental considerations into the plan or programme 3
Justification for the plan or programme as adopted 7
Addressing Regulation 10(1)(c) of S.L. 549.61 8
Air Quality 9
Climate Change 9
Cultural Heritage 10
Energy 10
Geology, Geomorphology and Hydrology 10
Landscape 11
Biodiversity 11
Maritime uses and transportation 12

List of Tables

Table 1: Air Quality Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 9
Table 2: Climate Change Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 10
Table 3: Cultural Heritage Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 10
Table 4: Energy and Water Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 10
Table 5: Geology, Geomorphology and Hydrology Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources . 11
Table 6: Land Use & Landscape Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 11
Table 7: Biodiversity Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 12
Table 8: Transport & Related Infrastructure Monitoring Parameters & Data Sources 12

Introduction

The Energy and Water Agency (EWA) has commissioned AIS Environment Ltd. to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for MALTA'S NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY (PORE). This plan defines Malta's policy direction for setting the foundation to venture in the offshore renewable energy sector.

The SEA was carried out in accordance with local legislation S.L.549.61 (Environment Protection Act), and involved the following phases as outlined in the tender proposal:

Phase 1: Scoping phase including consultation
Phase 2: Compilation of the Environment Report including consultation
Phase 3: Statement of Adoption

This report achieves the requirements of Phase 3 (adoption statement). This document has been prepared in line with the requirements of regulation 10 of the SEA Regulations (S.L. 549.61) and includes significant contribution by AIS Environment. It further underlines how relevant entities and authorities shall take into account the recommendations included in the Environment Report.

Summary of the SEA Process

The SEA Regulations (S.L. 549.61) and EU Directive 2001/42/EC require that any plans and programmes which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment should be subjected to an SEA. An SEA is required for all plans and projects that "*set the framework for future development consent of projects*" across all sectors, including transport, energy, fisheries, forestry, waste management, water management and land use planning. The SEA was conducted alongside the development of the plan or programme and considered multiple alternative options. The SEA consultant evaluated likely significant environmental effects of each alternative and put forward recommendations. The consultants also presented the findings during stakeholder and public consultations, and integrated comments from the consultees into the documentation.

The scope of the SEA is identified in the SEA Scoping Report prepared by the SEA consultants, AIS Environment Ltd. The scoping exercise sets out the context for the assessment, methodology and defines the scope of the SEA. It is one of the most important stages in the process as it identifies the issues for consideration in the duration of the SEA process.

As required by Article 5 (2) and Article 6(2) of S.L. 549.61, the Screening and Scoping Report underwent a stakeholder consultation period that involved the respective designated authorities as required by S.L. 549.61 article 7 (3) including the Environment and Resources Authority, the Regulator for Energy and Water Services, the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Animal Rights, Ministry for Health, and the Environmental Health Directorate. The consultation period allowed the interested parties to provide feedback on the results of the Screening and Scoping exercises. This first consultation period allowed the Consultants to properly integrate all environmental considerations and viewpoints in the early stages of the SEA. Following a public consultation session, the Scoping Report was finalised taking into account the consultation responses from two stakeholders.

The consultants drafted and submitted the Environment Report in line with the finalised Scoping Report in March 2024. A public consultation exercise was conducted and some comments were received. Consequently, after the expiry of the public consultation, the Environment Report was finalised in May 2024.

The finalised Environment Report, in line with Article 5 of the SEA Directive, includes a description of the reasonable alternatives considered during the drafting of the National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy (PORE), a description of the baseline environment relevant to the measures proposed and links with other policies, plans, programmes, environmental objectives, EU Directives, and national legislation. The report also includes existing environmental issues affecting the implementation of the Plan. The consultants highlighted and discussed the likely significant effect of the Plan on the environment, including air quality, biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage, energy, geology & hydrology, landscape, maritime uses & transportation. A description of possible mitigation measures together with monitoring measures are also described in detail.

SEA Adoption Statement

Regulation 10(1) of the SEA Regulations (S.L. 549.61) requires that the responsible authority ensures that consultation is undertaken appropriately. Consultation should be carried out with the authorities referred to in regulation 7(3), the competent authority, the public and any Member State consulted under regulation 8 to ensure that these authorities are informed that such a plan has been adopted. The responsible authority is also required to make available the plan and a statement in line with regulation 10(1)(b) and the monitoring plan in line with regulation 10(1)(c).

In line with regulation 10(1)(b) and (c), the Adoption Statement provides a summary of the following information:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme (vide Section 0)
- How the environment report prepared pursuant to regulation 6, the options expressed pursuant to regulation 7 the results of consultations entered into pursuant to regulation 8 have been taken into account in accordance with regulation 9 (vide Section 1)
- The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt, with (vide Section 0)
- The measures that have been decided concerning the monitoring in accordance with regulation 11

Addressing Regulation 10(1)(b) of S.L. 549.61

Integration of environmental considerations into the plan or programme

The objective of the Plan is to set the foundation to venture in a new arena of offshore renewable energy. The development of an offshore renewable energy policy aims at strengthening Malta's overall energy policy, contributing further to the country's already successful path in achieving a 'greener' balance between energy-use and impact on the environment. It also forms the foundations for successfully implementing the European Green Deal, wherein the Maltese Government pledges to make all efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Significant technological progress in floating offshore wind technologies has created a viable local alternative for feasible offshore renewable projects situated at a greater distance from the coastline. In comparison to onshore or near-shore wind farms, these projects are anticipated to have a reduced environmental impact and potentially impose less strain on various economic activities vying for the same sites. The development of larger offshore wind structures with high-capacity factors, advancements in floating technologies, and economies of scale in production contribute to a lower Levelized Cost of Electricity (LCOE), positioning offshore floating as candidate technology for harnessing large scale renewable energy in Malta.

Regulation 10 of the SEA regulations requires that the environment report identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme and examines reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme. The PORE identified and justified six

areas (Areas 1-6), falling under the extended low-risk scenario and located within the Malta FMZ (Fisheries Management Zone), for the potential development of offshore wind and solar farms. These areas have been identified following an initial resource assessment and a preliminary sea and bathymetric assessment. This also included further considerations on spatial constraints already existing in these areas, coupled with the feedback obtained from consultations with a number of stakeholders. The policy also includes information on the applicable statutory clearances required, grid connection points, coastal and port infrastructure to support activities associated with offshore technologies, wind resource data, grid stability, regulatory and implementation framework, decommissioning and other aspects related to the deployment of offshore renewable energy sources.

The SEA Consultants assessed the impacts of the Plan measures on the eight environmental themes as part of the SEA process. The SEA consultants compared the Zero-Option (Alternative 0) to a number of alternative scenarios:

1. **Alternative A:** *Consideration of developing renewable energy projects in Areas 1 & 2 only (Cluster 1) – total area: 420km^2 (273km^2 + 147km^2 respectively)*
2. **Alternative B:** *Consideration of developing renewable energy projects in Areas 3 & 4 only (Cluster 2) – total area: 1,336km^2 (1,157km^2 + 179km^2 respectively)*
3. **Alternative C:** *Consideration of developing renewable energy projects in Areas 5 & 6 (Cluster 3) – total area: 1,237km^2 (613km^2 + 580km^2 respectively)*
4. **Alternative D:** *Consideration of developing renewable energy projects in all areas (Areas 1 to 6)* **–** *total area: 2,993km^2*

The SEA process makes a number of recommendations. These have been duly considered and details of how these would be accounted for, where applicable, is provided hereunder.

1. Absence of detailed design criteria

The report recommends the inclusion of technical design and environmental criteria within the policy document. To note the PORE already identifies potential landing sites for the grid connection of offshore sites but also acknowledges that the actual routing can only be determined at the project design level, whereby safeguards are already in place through relevant environment legislation. One of the main functions of PORE is to serve as a preliminary guidance document including for the upcoming/ongoing considerations of designation of Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs). It was also outside the scope of the PORE to delve into ancillary technical options such as battery storage, given that such technology is assessed as part of the grid development process.

The fact that the PORE is technology neutral, and it is not per se' defining RAAs, makes it difficult to establish more specific environmental guidelines.

To comprehensively understand the potential appeal and pitfalls of each RES area, the detailed appraisal of each site through in-depth site-specific surveys is necessary. Further information shall be acquired through detailed ground-truthing surveys. Such surveys are expected to involve site-selection exercises within the boundaries of the designated areas to facilitate the development of multiple designs, layouts and methodologies through an iterative process, leading to diminished environmental impacts. Various mitigation measures would also need to be adopted during such ground-truthing surveys to minimise the disturbance on marine wildlife.

Some environmental considerations proposed in the SEA report could therefore be considered in the following stages of determining potential RAAs and offshore projects.

2. Minimising impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites

The report notes that despite positioning offshore RES areas away from Natura 2000 sites, all six shortlisted areas share boundaries with various Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Furthermore, most of the cable routes connecting the six areas to the mainland are likely to pass through Natura 2000 sites.

In view of the potential for impacts during various phases of such RES projects, the report recommends the setting up of additional spatial buffer zones along the perimeters of Natura 2000 sites to increase the distances to offshore RES projects. However, adopting such a drastic approach would automatically exclude areas and project siting configurations which could still be viable from an environmental perspective. This recommendation will be further considered in the following stages of determining potential RAAs and offshore projects.

3. Shipping lanes through proposed RES sites

The environmental report notes that the RES sites encompass various shipping routes within them and that some of the proposed RES areas (especially Areas 1, 2, 3 and 6) could intersect with existing shipping routes to/from various parts of the Mediterranean region The PORE already excludes zones which host significant maritime activity such as trawling and major shipping routes. Whilst diverting such routes may be the preferred course of action for RES project proponents, the size of the selected areas should facilitate the avoidance of important shipping routes when these are allocated for the development of renewable energy projects.

The potential coexistence of shipping corridors within RES areas may be possible through discussions with key maritime stakeholders actively utilising routes in these regions, especially if the identified areas shall not be developed for the exclusive use of RES projects. International guidelines[1] for wind farms in close proximity to shipping lanes may be referred to when setting up these areas.

4. Flight approaches

The PORE considered airport buffer zones and harbour approaches as No-Go areas and were thus "*not included or recommend as available areas for large floating setups*". Nevertheless, the SEA recognises other potential risks associated with the use of radar, flight approaches and flight circles which may require further consideration. The SEA recommends that project-specific aeronautical studies are carried out to shed further light to ensure that the proposed RES project layouts do not cause any impacts on aerial routes. Given that the outcome of these studies is highly dependent on the characteristics of each individual project, this recommendation will be considered in the following stages of determining the RAAs and offshore projects.

[1] https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/7_transport_offshore_wind_kg_0.pdf

5. Climate Proofing

All infrastructure constructed within the scope of the PORE policy is expected to last a certain amount of time given the capital investment involved. Consequently, the SEA recommends that project developers should consider subjecting their projects to climate proofing assessment to safeguard them from future changes in climatic conditions. Given that these projects are expected to have inbuilt resilience to both weather and climate events, it is appropriate for project developers to consider the integration of feasible climate resilience measures within the frameworks of the infrastructure development.

6. Marine Spatial Planning

The SEA identifies how the development of the PORE and specific offshore RES projects must be informed by strategic maritime spatial planning led by the government and supported by key stakeholders. Given that the SPED(Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development), which also constitutes Malta's Maritime Spatial Plan is under review, the PORE is indeed intended to feed into the process of updating the SPED.

Preparation of the Environment Report pursuant to regulations 6, 7, 8 & 9

Effective consultation is one of the foundations of good governance. Effective consultation gives stakeholders the earliest possible possibility for participation in the decision-making process. A list of relevant stakeholders was drawn up and approved by the SEA Focal Point as part of the Screening Report. The stakeholders listed below were approached as part of the SEA process.

Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)
Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS)
Directorate for Agriculture
Directorate for Fisheries
Ministry for Health

The leading Entity in the development of the PORE is the Energy & Water Agency. Policy consultations involving stakeholders have already taken place during the drafting stage of Malta's first PORE, throughout the month of September 2023. Entities considered as key stakeholders to Malta's PORE are listed hereunder:

- Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development (University of Malta)
- Institute for Sustainable Energy (University of Malta)
- Department of Geosciences (University of Malta)
- Malta College for Art and Science
- Enemalta Plc
- Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration of the Grand Harbour
- Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
- Ministry of Finance and Employment
- Ministry for Gozo and Planning

- Continental Shelf Department
- Superintendence of Cultural Heritage
- Heritage Malta
- Transport Malta
- Ambjent Malta
- Malta Resources Authority
- Planning Authority
- Malta Chamber of Geologists
- Malta Aquaculture Directorate
- Aquaculture and fisheries operators
- Għaqda Koperattiva tas-Sajd
- Koperattiva tas-sajd Malta
- Flimkien għal Ambjent Ahjar
- Friends of the Earth Malta
- Biological Conservation Research Foundation
- Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna
- Nature Trust
- Moviment Graffitti
- Birdlife Malta
- Din l-Art Helwa
- Potential investors in offshore RES

Stakeholders were consulted throughout the process of the SEA in order to ensure their effective participation. The consultations ensured that all affected parties have the opportunity to provide their opinions on the impacts of the proposed measures. This helped to ensure that, as much as possible, the final Plan is effective and specific to the bettering of the Maltese Islands and Maltese society.

Stakeholder and public consultation continued in the next phase of the project following the presentation of the draft version of the Environmental Report, in line with Regulation 7 of S.L. 549.61. Any feedback received from such consultations was duly answered and addressed in the report.

Justification for the plan or programme as adopted

Comparing the proposed plan with alternative scenarios is a vital part of the SEA process since it allows the identification of potential recommendations and improvements which could mitigate any adverse impacts. This stage in the process focuses on identifying alternative approaches which could give better environmental conditions.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report assessed five Alternative Scenarios regarding the development of renewable energy sources (RES) in Malta's offshore areas. These alternatives ranged from no action (Alternative 0) to full implementation of the policy (Alternative D), including various degrees of development in between. The report highlighted how larger footprints tended to have more significant impacts, both positive and negative, with distinct location-specific concerns.

The beneficial impacts of RES projects were emphasized, particularly in improving air quality, addressing climate change, and diversifying the energy mix away from conventional sources.

The report emphasized the role of renewable energy in meeting Malta's environmental goals and energy commitments. Calculations showed that Alternatives A to D had the potential to meet and exceed Malta's electricity demands until 2040, significantly increasing the share of renewable energy sources, albeit this would still require short term and seasonal storage to secure full autonomy

However, offshore developments could lead to adverse effects such as habitat fragmentation, impacting geology, biodiversity, landscape, maritime activities, transportation, and cultural heritage. Alternative D showed the greatest potential for exporting electricity from RES generation but also yielded the highest number of major adverse impacts due to its large footprint.

Alternative A, being the smallest area for development, offered some advantages over larger alternatives in terms of landscape and biodiversity impacts. However, it also posed risks related to bird migratory routes, landslide susceptibility, and shipping routes density.

Alternatives B and C covered larger areas, with similar beneficial impacts but differing in adverse impacts. Alternative B was favoured due to its potential to meet electricity demands with partial development, confining environmental impacts to one area and potentially minimizing adverse effects on maritime transportation.

The report recommended prioritizing Alternative B, particularly Area 3, over other alternatives. A staggered approach to development, focusing on specific areas, was suggested during site allocation and tendering processes to optimize outcomes while minimizing adverse impacts.

While renewable energy projects offer substantial benefits, careful consideration of location-specific impacts is crucial. Prioritizing Alternatives with minimized adverse effects, such as Alternative B's Area 3, could lead to the most advantageous scenario for Malta's energy transition.

Addressing Regulation 10(1)(c) of S.L. 549.61

Periodic monitoring and review of the Plan is necessary to enable continued success of the strategy. The monitoring plan is set to reflect the changes in national patterns for all environmental themes, technology development and ongoing discussions at European level relating to the PORE.

Measurable indicators are necessary to quantitatively assess the strategy’s implementation success. In fact, such indicators have been used to predict how the ten environmental themes will be affected by the realisation of the measures. Making use of the same indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan would facilitate the interpretation of the results. Additional monitoring parameters have been proposed, particularly in order to monitor operations of the various facilities that may be funded by the plan.

In most cases, the monitoring parameters can be obtained from existing programmes/datasets gathered as a result of environmental permitting, environmental assessments and/or other national monitoring programmes which are associated with the implementation of environmental obligations. In this way, duplication of efforts is avoided. The aim of this monitoring programme is to have a consistent set of data upon which potential adverse environmental impacts can be identified, prevented and/or mitigated.

There are also project-level mechanisms that are in place to protect the environment, such as detailed EIAs in line with the EIA Regulations and environmental/industrial permitting.

Nevertheless, the EU has published and implemented Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 and EU Directive 2023/2413 to address an energy supply crisis in a difficult geopolitical context. This Regulation and Directive have been set up to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy projects and to strengthen the EU's security of supply and lower energy prices.

The following subsections outline the monitoring and measurements recommended for the implementation stage of the PORE.

Air Quality

Monitoring of air quality during construction works and the operational lifetime of the RES project may help to assess the adverse impacts arising from the measures relating to the proposed infrastructure upgrades. The Plan's measures include the construction of new offshore wind farms which may release certain atmospheric pollutants particularly during the transportation of materials and the offshore structures. The operation of such wind farms would also offset some of the fossil fuel emissions generated by the national power station in Delimara.

The chemical parameters considered as part of this SEA are regularly being monitored by the ERA (on land) in relation to national monitoring programmes; such data can be made use of for air quality monitoring purposes. Operational monitoring data should be obtained from the annual reporting requirements of the Delimara Power Station IPPC permits.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1: AIR QUALITY MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Air quality	National emissions (tonnage) of pollutants into the air, with regards to Malta's obligations under the NEC Directive 2016/2284	ERA (national Emission reduction Commitments Directive – National emission inventory)
	Facility emissions (tonnage) of pollutants into the air, in line with the Environment Protection Act (CAP 549), Industrial Emissions (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) Regulations (S.L. 549.77), and/or Limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants regulations (S.L. 549.122) as applicable	ERA (EU Registry on Industrial Sites and E-PRTR and LCP integrated data reporting)

Climate Change

The Plan measures aim to, amongst others, increase the contribution of renewable energy sources and facilitate the transition to a lower national carbon footprint. To monitor the success of the Plan, the net atmospheric emissions of greenhouse gases on a national scale should be measured and monitored over time. Such data monitoring is already ongoing and data sets are readily available.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2: CLIMATE CHANGE MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Climate change	Greenhouse gas emission levels and trends	EEA Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Cultural Heritage

Maintaining the conservation status of cultural heritage can be achieved by protecting undocumented, scheduled and designated areas from various threats such as take-up seabed/land, maritime anchoring and land reclamation which may damage archaeological features of national importance. Monitoring the success of this criterion involves the assessment of the number of issues relating to features of cultural heritage, along with the archaeological monitoring of such works to properly document any discoveries.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 3.

TABLE 3: CULTURAL HERITAGE MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Cultural heritage	Underwater cultural heritage data	SCH & University of Malta Pre-construction geophysical surveys

Energy

Energy generation, security of supply and diversity of energy mix are promoted through the implementation and diversification of offshore renewable energy projects as proposed in the PORE. Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 4.

TABLE 4: ENERGY AND WATER MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Energy	Energy generation by type	Eurostat/EWA/NSO
	% share of renewable energy	
	Energy consumption levels by type (split by sector for each fuel type)	
	Security of supply	

Geology, Geomorphology and Hydrology

Efficient resource management is achieved through the promotion of sustainable use of resources. Works which are expected to increase waste generation, such as construction works, should be monitored. Pre-commissioning surveys along cable routes and within the designated offshore RES sites are expected to generate substantial detailed information that could shed further information about the geology, geomorphology and hydrology of Malta's offshore areas.

TABLE 5: GEOLOGY, GEOMORPHOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Geology, geomorphology and hydrology	Offshore & nearshore marine features of geology, geomorphology and hydrology datasets	University of Malta

Landscape

The offshore RES developments are likely to have an adverse effect on the seascape and landscape. Such impacts would arise both due to the presence of machinery during the construction works, and due to permanent structures during the operational phase. Although impacts on landscape are difficult to quantify at this stage, indicators such as the extent of Areas of Very High Landscape Sensitivity (AHLVs) can be indirectly used to monitor and measure these impacts; such data is readily available from the PA. Reduced AHLVs indicate that the landscape has been negatively impacted. Furthermore, monitoring the status of current and future UNESCO Heritage Sites in Malta is essential due to the landscape impacts that are envisaged from the development of offshore RES projects.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 6.

TABLE 6: LAND USE & LANDSCAPE MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Landscape	Status of landform and topography, landscape, the natural beauty and scenic amenity of the landscape	PA (Areas of High Landscape Value)
	Status of UNESCO Heritage sites in Malta	UNESCO

Biodiversity

Criteria for biodiversity ensure that the ecological status of Maltese ecosystems is maintained and safeguarded. This is measurable by observing trends of parameters which are already being monitored in line with the MSFD, HD, BD and WFD. In this case, relevant parameters include the good environmental status of Malta's water bodies in terms of biodiversity (Descriptor 1 – includes seabirds, reptiles and marine mammals), non-indigenous species (Descriptor 2), commercial fish species (Descriptor 3), food webs (Descriptor 4), seafloor integrity (Descriptor 6), contaminants in seafood (Descriptor 9) and marine litter (Descriptor 10). Parameters include the contaminant levels in seafood and geographical distribution of indicator species such as *Posidonia oceanica*.

Any construction works that could have a significant adverse impact on sensitive areas such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) may also be subjected to further screening processes in line with the FLORA, FAUNA AND NATURAL HABITATS PROTECTION REGULATIONS, TREES AND WOODLANDS PROTECTION REGULATIONS and CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS REGULATIONS.

In terms of avifauna and cetaceans, the continuous collection of GPS tracking data is necessary to overcome and address data gaps encountered during the SEA process. The

development of sensitivity/risks indices is also of paramount importance to inform decision makers on micro-siting preferences and co-location agglomeration options.

Since these parameters are assessed through existing national monitoring programmes, such data is readily available from the ERA.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in Table 7.

TABLE 7: BIODIVERSITY MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Biodiversity	Status of protected habitats and species of flora and fauna	ERA (Common Database on Designated Areas, Reporting under Article 17 of Habitats Directive, Reporting under Article 12 of the Birds Directive and reporting under the MSFD marine monitoring programme)
	Status of environmental factors, including coastal water, groundwater, geology and soil	ERA (WISE SoE Dataflows, Reporting under Article 17 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

Maritime uses and transportation

Transport and maritime uses are likely to be constrained by the allocation of areas for offshore RES projects. Continuous monitoring of the national maritime traffic situation is required to assess the success of the policy; this can be achieved through measurable parameters such as keeping track of maritime traffic data through AIS (Automatic Identification Systems) . Project proponents are also required to consider existing utility cables and pipelines to minimise overlaps and accidental damages during construction and/or maintenance operations.

Through the Marine Spatial Plan for the Maltese islands, the maritime uses are synergistically set up to minimise inconveniences. All works that temporarily take up marine areas must be appropriately covered by a Notice to Mariners.

Monitoring parameters and data sources are outlined in the table below.

TABLE 8: TRANSPORT & RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE MONITORING PARAMETERS & DATA SOURCES

THEME	MONITORING PARAMETERS	DATA SOURCE
Transport & Maritime uses	Maritime transportation routes	NSO/TM