On the Environmental Effectiveness of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive

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Abstract

Marine and coastal ecosystems – and thus the benefits they create for humans – are subject to increasing pressures and competing usages. For this reason, the European Union (EU) adopted the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which is to guide future maritime policy in the EU and aims at achieving or maintaining a good environmental status (GES) of European seas by 2020. To this end, the MSFD requires the development of improvement measures, which have to be assessed inter alia by examining their cost-effectiveness and by carrying out cost-benefit analysis (CBA) before their implementation.

This paper investigates the applicability of environmental CBA in the marine context. It identifies and discusses problems that could hamper the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD. For example, the fact that marine ecosystem services are much less tangible than terrestrial ones implies greater challenges for the quantification of benefits for society in a marine context. One finding is that the limitations of environmental valuation methods regarding their ability to capture the whole total economic value of improvement measures are a potential source of problems, as the MSFD allows countries to disregard measures with disproportionately high costs. The trans-boundary nature of the main European seas adds to the complexity of the valuation task, e.g. due to the danger that benefits that occur outside of national territories are neglected. Moreover, the current state of knowledge on the functioning of complex marine ecosystems and the links to socio-economic impacts and human well-being seem insufficient to meet the MSFD requirements.

Keywords: Cost-benefit-analysis, ecosystem services, environmental valuation, EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Europe

JEL Classification: Q51, Q53, Q57, Q58

1 Introduction

Marine and coastal ecosystems are important for humans in multiple ways. They provide a number of goods and services which are used directly and indirectly by humans. These goods and services include the provisioning of food, energy and mineral resources but also the regulation of important ecological functions such as the climate system. Moreover, the ocean offers transport routes and recreational opportunities. However, marine and coastal ecosystems – and thus the benefits they create for humans – are subject to increasing pressures and competing usages (Nunes, Ding and Markandya, 2009; Luisetti et al., 2011). These pressures result e.g. from intensified fishing efforts, nutrient enrichment, increasing maritime transport, pollution, noise, sediment sealing and increasing ocean acidification caused by anthropogenic CO_2 emissions. Despite their great importance, goods and services provided by marine and coastal ecosystems have received far less attention than those provided by terrestrial ecosystems – maybe due to the difference in access and direct experience (COWI, 2010; TEEB, 2009).

From a European policy perspective, increasing threats to the marine environment resulting from human use have been recognized, and there are several regulations that aim at managing the human impact on the marine environment.[1] Most recently, the European Union (EU) adopted the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD[2]) in 2008, which is to guide future maritime policy and aims at achieving or maintaining a good environmental status (GES) of Europe's seas by 2020. The MSFD requires an assessment of how humans use the marine environment and the development of action plans and explicit measures to achieve a GES by 2020. Before their implementation, these measures inter alia need to be assessed by examining their cost-effectiveness and by carrying out cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

While the costs of such improvement measures are often relatively easy to determine, e.g. in terms of foregone revenues, the determination of the associated benefits is more challenging for at least two reasons. The first difficulty is to trace how a change in the marine biosphere (e.g. less marine litter or lower levels of nutrient loads) that leads to a change in the provisioning of ecosystem goods or services finally affects benefits for humans. Second, the associated benefits need to be quantified in monetary terms to carry out a CBA. Many ecosystem goods and services, particularly those created in a marine environment, are not traded on markets and thus prices, as

[1] Measures taken include the introduction of marine protected areas, fishing quotas, and measures to prevent pollution. There are two international conventions that focus on the North Sea and the Baltic Sea respectively, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR, 1992) and the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM, 1974). The European Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000) is related to the provisions of OSPAR and HELCOM, as it aims at establishing a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater.

[2] Directive 2008/56/EG. The MSFD entered into force on 17 June 2008.

an indicator for values, do not exist. Environmental valuation methods can be used to value such non-market goods and services.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the challenge to value marine ecosystem goods and services in the context of the MSFD, which requires the application of an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities affecting the marine environment (Art. 1.3 MSFD).[3] Some scoping studies have been carried out that examine the economic requirements of the MSFD and review the existing literature on marine ecosystem goods and services and their valuation. COWI (2010) identifies explicit and implicit economic requirements of the MSFD and assesses the possible role that economic analysis can play in its implementation. Turner et al. (2010) present different methodological tools that can be used to analyze the role of socio-economic drivers and responses in environmental-economic systems[4] and provide an overview of valuation studies on marine ecosystem services in European countries.

Our paper contributes to the existing literature by assessing the limitations of environmental valuation and CBA in the marine context and by highlighting the possible consequences; the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD might be hampered and the GES might not be achieved. Existing valuation studies, for example, tend to look at changes in tangible benefits like recreation and food provisioning but mostly ignore changes in more intangible benefits derived e.g. from ecosystem functioning or resilience. However, it might be these services that are more important for sustainable development and society as a whole. A CBA that ignores such services will most likely underestimate the true value of marine ecosystem goods and services significantly. Since the costs of improvement measures are easier to determine, this in turn might reduce the probability of measures being implemented.

To illustrate our reasoning, we consider the example of eutrophication, listed as a pressure in the MSFD (App. III, Table 2 MSFD), in more detail. Unlike other pressures, eutrophication is one of the few pressures identified by the MSFD that is scientifically relatively well understood and for which a number of economic valuation studies exist. Moreover, eutrophication is one of the leading causes of water quality impairment around the world and a major problem in Europe.[5] We combine background knowledge from natural sciences with economic methodologies and

[3] This approach is based on the recommendations of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005) as well as the study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB, 2010), which both call for a holistic valuation approach based on the concept of ecosystem services.

[4] These tools include the Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response framework, scenario analysis, and cost-benefit analysis (CBA), including the corresponding theoretical background.

[5] In 2008, a global review identified 415 areas worldwide which experienced symptoms of eutrophication, of which only 13 were classified as recovering (Selman et al., 2008). Though progress has been made in Europe, eutrophication is still a major problem in Europe's seas – not only in the Baltic and the North Sea but to some extent also in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea (Coll et al., 2010; Remoundou et al., 2009).

reconsider the concept of total economic value (TEV) applied to this complex environmental problem to better demonstrate the challenges for economic assessments. To our knowledge, we are the first to identify gaps in knowledge that might affect the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD, based on the most recent studies that evaluate economic benefits of eutrophication reductions, and also taking into account the recommendations prompted by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005) as well as the study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB, 2010), and their reflection in the MSFD requirements. In particular, we show that the complex interactions between ecological effects and human well-being considerably increase the challenge for environmental valuation in the marine context.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we present the main MSFD requirements with a special focus on the provisions that contain economic terms. In section 3, we highlight important concepts underlying economic valuation of ecosystem goods and services, briefly review economic valuation methods, and relate them to the marine context. In section 4, we sketch the ecological aspects of eutrophication, and highlight the complexity of the interactions between ecological eutrophication effects and human well-being. Moreover, we review the valuation literature on eutrophication in European seas and illustrate the challenges of environmental valuation and CBA in the context of eutrophication. In section 5, we discuss in detail the implications for the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD that are implied by the economic requirements of the MSFD, by the nature of the environmental valuation methods, and by the interdisciplinary nature of environmental valuation. Section 6 concludes.

2 Requirements of the MSFD

The aim of the MSFD is to effectively protect the marine environment in Europe and to sustain the associated natural resource base, which is essential for a number of marine-related economic and social activities. To this end, the MSFD aims at achieving or maintaining a GES of Europe's seas (Baltic Sea, Northeast Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, and Black Sea) by 2020 (Art. 1.1 MSFD). The MSFD constitutes an important cornerstone of the EU's future maritime policy and aims at promoting the integration of environmental considerations in all relevant policy areas (Preamble, no. 3 MSFD).

To this end, the MSFD requires EU MSs to develop marine strategies for their marine waters (Art. 5.1 MSFD) in order to preserve or restore marine ecosystems and prevent their deterioration (Art. 1.2 (a) MSFD). These marine strategies shall apply an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities affecting the marine environment and ensure a sustainable use of marine goods and services by present and future generations (Art. 1.3 MSFD). The marine strategies shall include i.) an initial assessment of the current environmental status of the marine waters, including the environmental impact of human activities thereon, ii.) a description of the GES, including the selection of a series of environmental targets and associated indicators, iii.) a monitoring program for the ongoing assessment and regular updating of targets, and iv.) a program of measures designed to achieve GES (Art. 5.2 (a-b) MSFD).

To take account of the trans-boundary nature of marine waters, the MSFD defines marine regions and subregions according to geographical and ecological criteria. MSs sharing a marine region or subregion shall cooperate in developing their national marine strategies to ensure coherence and coordination (Art. 5.2 MSFD). The MSFD also requires MSs to take into account trans-boundary effects of measures in the same marine region or subregion (Art. 2.1; also Art. 8.3(b), 14.1(d), 13.8).

The MSFD explicitly requires MSs to take into account social and economic aspects when preparing and implementing their marine strategies. The four key economic requirements of the MSFD are presented in the following:[6]

- Initial assessment of a MS's marine waters, including economic and social analysis (ESA) of the use of those waters, and of the cost of degradation of the marine environment (Art. 8.1(c) MSFD)

[6] See COWI (2010) for a more detailed review of the economic requirements of the MSFD.

- Establishment of environmental targets and associated indicators describing GES, including due consideration of social and economic concerns (Art. 10.1 in connection with Annex IV, no. 9 MSFD)
- Identification and analysis of measures needed to be taken to achieve or maintain GES, ensuring cost-effectiveness of measures and assessing the social and economic impacts including cost-benefit analysis (Art. 13.3 MSFD)
- Justification of exceptions to implement measures to reach GES based on disproportionate costs of measures taking account of the risks to the marine environment (Art. 14.4 MSFD)

Economic considerations are thus central for developing the marine strategies required by the MSFD. For example, CEA and CBA have to be carried out before the implementation of any new measure to reach GES. Moreover, economic considerations are likely to play a major role for justifying exceptions from the requirement to reach GES. Several reports, including a guidance document published by the European Working Group on the Economic and Social Assessment (EU WG ESA) in December 2010, aim at clarifying the role of economic analysis for the implementation of the MSFD (EC, 2010; COWI, 2010; Eftec/Enveco, 2010). Still, in a number of cases, it is not yet clear how economic considerations interact with each other and with other disciplinary considerations required by the MSFD. This is discussed in more detail in section 5 of this paper.

3 Environmental valuation in the marine context – Underlying concepts and valuation methods

3.1 Underlying concepts

As mentioned in the previous section, the MSFD requires the application of an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. This approach should also be followed when marine strategies, including the programs of measures to achieve a GES, are designed (Art. 1.3 MSFD). It acknowledges that intact marine ecosystems provide a wide variety of benefits to society through the goods and services they offer. Moreover, it emphasizes that ecosystems as a whole are important for humans. There are different approaches used to categorize ecosystem goods and services and the benefits they create for humans; two very important ones are the approach of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005) and the approach of the total economic value (TEV; Pearce and Turner, 1990).

The MEA approach highlights the complex interactions between ecosystem services, human behavior, and well-being. While humans impact on ecosystems directly and indirectly and on different scales, this alters the services provided by ecosystems, which then influences human well-being and feeds back into decision-making and direct and indirect drivers of change (TEEB, 2010). Ecosystem services are grouped into provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services (MEA, 2005). Relating to marine ecosystem services, provisioning services include the supply of fish, seafood, and medicinal plants. Regulating services include climate regulation, and water purification. Cultural services include spiritual, aesthetic, and recreational values, and supporting services include habitat provisioning and primary production (see also Table 1).

The TEV approach tries to capture all components that contribute to the value of ecosystem goods and services for humans. It divides the total value into use values and non-use values. Use values can further be divided into direct use values, indirect use values and option values. Non-use values can further be divided into existence values, bequest values and altruistic values (Pearce and Turner, 1990; see Figure 1 for examples in the marine context). The two concepts are interrelated. Regulating services mostly contribute to indirect use values, while provisioning and cultural services mostly create direct use values, which may be consumptive or non-consumptive. Cultural values according to MEA also create non-use values. All three ecosystem service categories can also provide option values. Supporting services are valued through the other categories of ecosystem services to avoid double counting (TEEB, 2010).

Table 1. Marine ecosystem goods and services.

Provisioning services	**Regulating services**
• Provision of food • Provision of genetic resources/medicine • Provision of energy (wind, wave, tide) • Provision of other renewable resources for other purposes (jewelry, souvenirs, etc.) • Provision of non-renewable resources • Provision of space and transport routes	• Gas and climate regulation • Storm and flood protection • Erosion control • Bioremediation of waste • Water purification and detoxification
Cultural services	**Supporting services**
• Recreation and leisure • Aesthetics and inspiration • Cultural heritage and identity • Spiritual and religious values • Science and education	• Primary production • Biogeochemical cycling • Ecosystem stability and resilience • Habitats • Food web dynamics • Biodiversity

Classification based on Arcadis Belgium (2010).

Ecosystem goods and services thus provide benefits to humans but their protection is costly. Consequently, measures that aim at protecting the marine environment may carry opportunity costs, and there will always be a need to choose between different conservation measures or to weigh conservation against other investment opportunities. Choosing between different measures or policies requires a thorough analysis of the pros and cons, the benefits and costs related to each of them. There are different forms of appraisal that use different sets of decision criteria. Box 1 provides a short overview of important appraisal methods.

An assessment of the costs and benefits related to a measure to protect the marine environment needs to distinguish between a financial and an economic analysis and thus between prices and values. Price, which is mostly used in financial analysis, is only that portion of value which is realized in markets. If markets are competitive and function without further distortions, prices may be a good approximation for value, i.e. for the relative scarcity of a good or service. If public goods are concerned or external effects exist, prices are biased and do not reveal the value attached to an ecosystem good or service. For most environmental goods and services, markets and thus prices do not exist at all. Economic analysis aims at unveiling the value of a change in the provisioning of such goods and services, incorporating as many constituents of value as possible (Turner et al., 2010; Bateman et al., 2011).

Box 1: Methods for project appraisal

One method, which is often used for project appraisal, is cost-benefit analysis (CBA). It aims at eliciting the welfare gain or loss for society related to a certain policy or project. Therefore, it involves identifying and measuring in monetary terms the costs and benefits associated with this policy or project. In this context, costs relate to welfare losses and benefits relate to welfare gains. Benefits or costs that cannot be monetized are often left out of the analysis. However, they can and should be integrated in qualitative terms.

A second method for project appraisal is cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA). It aims at finding a policy which can reach a pre-defined target at least cost. At this point, marginal costs are equal among policy options. Compared to CBA, the benefits of the policy do not have to be elicited as they are now held fix via the predefined target. This way of appraisal only refers to cost minimization, not to finding a policy with the most favorable relationship between benefits and costs.

A third method is multi-criteria-analysis (MCA). It offers a framework to rank different policy options according to well-specified evaluation criteria. Compared to CBA and CEA, these criteria do not have to be expressed in monetary terms, they only have to be measurable in some way. Moreover, MCA allows for stakeholder involvement and deliberation.

(Turner et al., 2010; see also references cited therein for more details)

While it is often relatively easy to determine the costs of conservation measures, e.g. through foregone revenues, it is much more difficult to elicit the associated benefits of these measures. Environmental valuation provides a way to make explicit in monetary terms the benefit flows generated by natural capital stocks and the effects of human decisions on these benefit flows.

Environmental valuation takes an anthropocentric view and is based on people's preferences for ecosystem goods and services. This implies that values can only be assigned to ecosystem services in so far as they fulfill human needs or bring about satisfaction for humans, thus contributing directly or indirectly to human well-being. Several methods have been developed that aim at eliciting the value people attach to ecosystem goods and services (see section 3.2). All methods have in common that they investigate how people's preferences are affected if there is a marginal change in the provisioning of a certain ecosystem good or service. Therefore, environmental valuation is not suited for the valuation of whole ecosystems. Moreover, environmental valuation is subjective and context-dependent (TEEB, 2010; Turner et al., 2010).

3.2 Valuation methods

The key question in environmental valuation is what is the maximum that a household would be willing to pay (WTP) for an improvement in environmental conditions or alternatively, what is the minimum that the household would be willing to accept (WTA) as compensation for a move to an inferior situation. The existing environmental valuation methods can be classified into direct market valuation methods, revealed preference methods and stated preference methods.[7] Direct market valuation methods use market data which is directly available for ecosystem goods that are traded on markets. Revealed preference methods also assume that consumer preferences can be revealed by their purchasing habits. They use the relationship between a non-market ecosystem service and a market good or service to estimate the WTP or WTA for a change in the ecosystem service. Stated preference methods, by contrast, use structured questionnaires to elicit people's preferences for a change in a certain ecosystem service. See Figure 1 for an overview of existing valuation methods and their applicability in the context of the TEV.

Direct market valuation methods

The *market price method* estimates economic values for ecosystem goods or services that are bought and sold in commercial markets, e.g. the market for fish and fish products.[8] Direct and indirect use values can be captured but not non-use values.

The *production function method* estimates how much a certain ecosystem service contributes to the provisioning of another ecosystem good or service, which is typically traded on commercial markets. This method is able to capture indirect use values.

Revealed preference methods

Individuals can buy market goods and services to defend against negative environmental impacts (*averting behavior*). In the marine context, an example could be special shoes that are bought because a beach is littered. This approach can capture direct and indirect use values.

The *hedonic method* assumes that property prices are determined by the characteristics of the property, including environmental characteristics such as a pleasant view. The value of ecosystem

[7] For an overview on the theory of the individual methods see Freeman (2003). See TEEB (2010) for a discussion of their applicability, advantages, disadvantages, and limitations.
[8] If markets are distorted, prices may need to be adjusted.

goods and services would thus be capitalized into property prices. Hedonic pricing can measure direct and indirect use values but its applicability in the marine context is limited.

The *travel cost (TC) method* is a survey-based method used to estimate recreational values associated with ecosystems or sites. Today, studies are mostly based on random utility models (RUM) to value changes in the quality or the quantity of an environmental characteristic at a particular site. The approach captures direct use values.

Stated preference methods

The *contingent valuation (CV) method* uses questionnaires to create a hypothetical market and to ask people for their WTA or their WTP for a change in a certain ecosystem service. The approach can, in principal, capture all elements of the TEV. However, surveys need to be explicit about the type of value that is to be elicited.

In *choice experiments (CE)*, people are asked to choose among sets of ecosystem services or environmental characteristics. Unlike CV, people are not directly asked for their WTP or WTA. This information is inferred from the trade-offs they make. For example, people can choose between different scenarios of water quality, characterized by different attributes such as water clarity or species abundance and the price that would have to be paid to achieve this state. Choice modeling can, again, capture all elements of the TEV.

Stated preference methods are very flexible and can be applied to a wide range of contexts. Also, they are the only methods that can estimate non-use values. It seems plausible to assume that in the marine context, where ecosystem goods and services are less visible than on land, non-use values are particularly significant.

Benefit transfer

Benefit transfer consists of an analysis of information provided by one single valuation study or a group of studies from the existing literature to value similar goods or services in another context. For this reason, it can only cover those elements of the TEV that were included in the original studies. Benefit transfer comprises point estimate transfer, functional transfer and, more recently, meta-analysis.

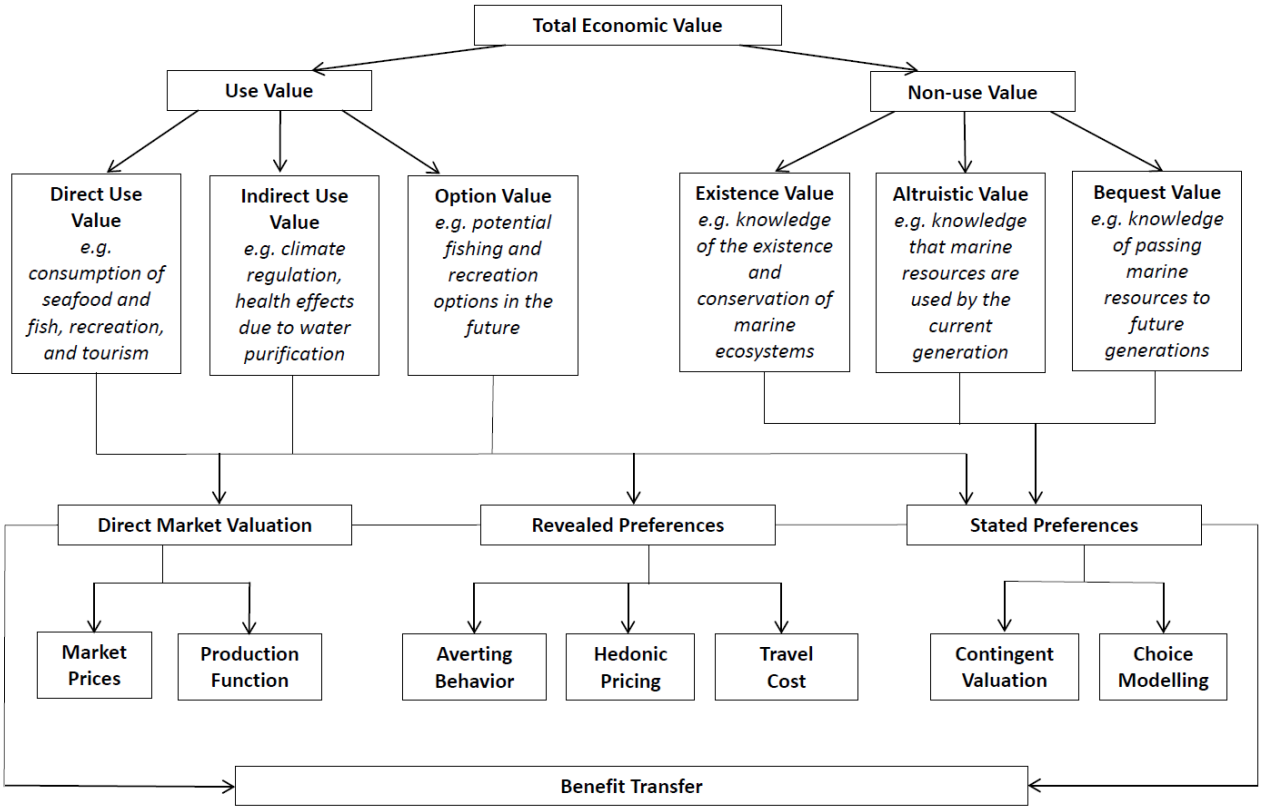


Figure 1. The concept of total economic value (TEV) and existing valuation methods.

Adapted from: Review of Technical Guidance on Environmental Appraisal (DETR/eftec, 1999), in DEFRA (2007), p. 34. Additional information from TEEB (2010), Remoundou et al. (2009), and Nunes, Ding and Markandya (2009).

Each of the valuation methods presented in this section has characteristic advantages and disadvantages and may be suited only for the valuation of certain ecosystem goods and services (DEFRA, 2007), but a comprehensive review of these specific advantages and disadvantages is beyond the scope of this paper. For an overview see TEEB (2010), Bateman et al. (2011), and Turner et al. (2010).

4 Eutrophication in European marine and coastal ecosystems

4.1 Interrelation between the ecological and the human dimension

Eutrophication remains a major problem in all enclosed seas and sheltered marine waters across the pan-European region (EEA, 2007).[9] The effects of eutrophication are most pronounced in regional seas which have a combination of a high population density in the catchment area and physiographic characteristics predisposing the sea to nutrient enrichment (HELCOM, 2009), such as the Baltic Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. Eutrophication causes complex changes within ecosystems. These changes in the biophysical sphere influence the extent to which marine environments are able to provide ecosystem goods and services to humans. Consequently, also human activities and benefits will be influenced by changes in the environmental state of the seas. Figure 2 provides a detailed overview of ecological eutrophication effects and their interaction with human activities and benefits via an alteration of the provisioning of ecosystem services. The complex interactions sketched in the figure also illustrate the implications for CBA required by the MSFD if an ecosystem-based approach is to be followed.

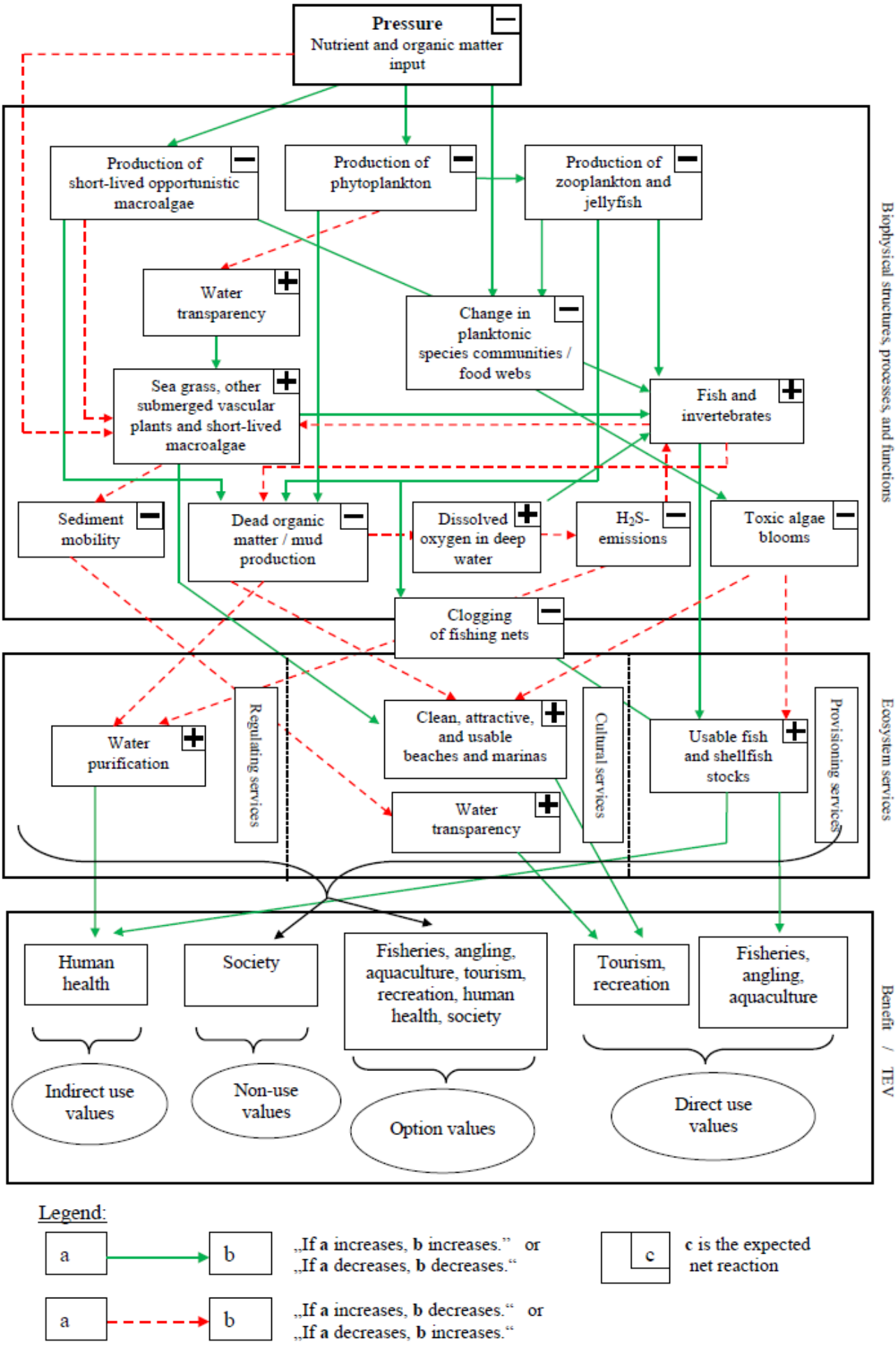
The ecological dimension

The starting point of the assessment is a decrease of the pressure "nutrient and organic matter enrichment" (Annex III, Table 2 MSFD).[10] This is shown at the top of Figure 2. One of the most prominent and direct effects of a reduction of nutrient inputs would be a decrease in phyto-plankton productivity and biomass as well as a decline of short-lived macroalgae stocks. Subsequently, the pressure reduction would induce complex changes in the structure and functioning of the entire marine ecosystem and an increase in ecosystem stability. These changes are described in more detail below and illustrated in the upper part of Figure 2.

The solid, green arrows in Figure 2 indicate a positive relationship between the two states in the two neighboring boxes. For example, higher water transparency induces a higher stock of seagrass

[9] The term eutrophication describes water conditions in which excessive amounts of nutrients such as nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) lead to a series of undesirable effects. In Europe, nutrients are transported to seas via rivers, direct discharges from sources along the coast and atmospheric deposition (HELCOM, 2009). The main human sources for eutrophication in the Baltic Sea can be divided into point sources such as industrial or municipal wastewater plants and diffuse sources such as agriculture and airborne loads e.g. from road traffic (HELCOM, 2009). In the Mediterranean Sea, urban wastewater discharges are important nutrient sources, particularly when they are untreated (EEA, 2006). In the Black Sea, the two major sources for eutrophication are riverine nutrient transport and atmospheric deposition, followed by direct discharges from large wastewater plants (BSC, 2009).

[10] We focus on pressure reductions because the MSFD requires CEA and CBA to be carried out specifically to analyze improvement measures, which aim at maintaining or restoring a GES.



Legend:

a → b „If a increases, b increases." or „If a decreases, b decreases."

a ⇢ b „If a increases, b decreases." or „If a decreases, b increases."

c c is the expected net reaction

Figure 2. Effects of eutrophication on marine ecosystem services and relationship to uses and benefits. Own presentation.

due to better light penetration. A dashed, red arrow in Figure 2 indicates a negative relationship between the two states in the two neighboring boxes. For example, higher production of phytoplankton induces less water transparency. Thus, the arrows represent the direct effect of a change between two boxes. The sign in the upper right edge of each box indicates the total expected net change of a state following the initial reduction of the pressure. For example, a reduction in nitrate and phosphate inputs would lead to a decrease in hydrogen sulphide (H_2S) emissions and toxic algal blooms.

Reduced nutrient enrichment would induce less murky water owing to blooms of planktonic algae, fewer mats of macroalgae at shores, increased distribution of benthic habitats such as eelgrass meadows due to enhanced light penetration, and less oxygen depletion resulting in fewer deaths of benthic animals and fish as well as decreasing occurrences of toxic algal blooms. Moreover, the decrease in primary production induces a decrease in sedimentation of organic matter to the seafloor (HELCOM, 2009; Claussen et al., 2009). Additional effects include enhanced CO_2 capture capacity due to increased kelp forests and lesser production of toxic H_2S, which can induce death of fish and benthic invertebrates (OSPAR, 2010).

The human dimension

The ecosystem services impacted by reduced eutrophication (sketched in the middle of Figure 2) constitute the link between the ecological and the human dimension, which refers to the benefits and values humans derive from marine ecosystem services. Less oxygen deficiency in less eutrophicated waters would, for example, avoid killings of fish, which would increase valuable fish stocks. Thus, direct use values derived from harvesting and consuming fish would increase. Moreover, less algal blooms would reduce the extent of unsightly foam masses and unpleasant smells. This would increase direct use values derived from recreational and aesthetic uses of the sea. Recreation and tourism are further affected by increased water transparency and by fewer blooms of toxic blue-green algae. These toxic algal blooms would otherwise impede the possibility to swim safely in the sea. Moreover, toxins that are produced by some algae may harm humans through the consumption of contaminated shellfish, though the exact link to nutrient enrichment is not yet established (HELCOM, 2009). Reduced eutrophication would alleviate such health effects, which would imply an increase in indirect use values.

In addition to these changes in use values, also non-use values and option values are positively influenced by a reduction in eutrophication. Lesser degrees of eutrophication would increase the ecosystem`s ability to react to future disturbances and thus the option to provide a stable flow of

ecosystem services in the future. Moreover, non-use values would be increased because of the increase in some species stocks or the amelioration of the ecosystem as a whole.

4.2 Economic valuation of eutrophication effects in Europe

As has become evident in the previous section, eutrophication causes complex changes within ecosystems and has been recognized as a major pressure for the European marine environment. Moreover, it has considerable impacts on the provisioning of ecosystem goods and services and human well-being. Despite the relatively large literature on natural science aspects of eutrophication, the economic valuation literature on eutrophication is relatively small and information is rather fragmented. Table 2 summarizes the findings of the valuation literature on eutrophication in European marine and coastal ecosystems.[11] Short summaries of the valuation studies are provided in the Appendix of this paper.

The literature overview demonstrates that there are still considerable gaps in knowledge, particularly if one takes into account the ambitious provisions of the MSFD concerning the application of economic CBA and CEA based on an ecosystem-based approach. These gaps refer to i.) the regional focus of the valuation studies, ii.) the relation of the benefit to the initial reduction in nutrient inputs, iii.) the category of ecosystem services that is considered, and iv.) the category of values and benefits that is covered. In the following, we discuss these individual gaps in more detail.

The first gap relates to the regional focus of the studies. All studies have a clear regional focus, with the majority of them having been carried out in Scandinavian countries. However, the last systematic and coordinated research effort to value the benefits of water quality improvements for the Baltic Sea, the Baltic Drainage Basin Project (BDBP), dates back to the 1990s (Turner et al., 1999) and may be considered outdated. Since then, mostly isolated valuation studies with a local or regional focus have been carried out.[12] In particular, there are only very few studies that value eutrophication effects for the other European seas (see Table 2). The isolated nature of most existing studies hinders a straightforward comparison between the estimated values.

[11] In the context of the WFD, a couple of economic studies have been carried out to value the benefit of reduced eutrophication in freshwater ecosystems. However, this literature is not considered further since significant differences exist between eutrophication occurring in the sea and in freshwater. Moreover, the MSFD specifically refers to marine and coastal ecosystems.

[12] A recent and still ongoing attempt for a new internationally coordinated evaluation of the Baltic Sea, including eutrophication effects, is the so-called BalticStern project. This project will encompass valuation studies of benefits but also estimates of cost functions for measures to mitigate eutrophication. So far, the published information on links between the costs of pressure reductions and related benefits are at best indicative (Huhtala et al., 2009).

Table 2. Overview of studies which value / estimate the benefits of reduced eutrophication in the European seas.

	Author(s), date and type of publication	Year of survey data	Region	Country	Benefit[c]	Method	Quality Indicator	WTP/WTA	Remarks
Baltic Sea	Kosenius (2010) (J)	2006	Gulf of Finland	Finland	Not specified	CE	Water clarity, abundance of coarse fish, state of bladder wrack & occurrence of blue-green algae blooms	Annual household WTP: 149-611€ to achieve most modest scenario, 210-666€ to achieve most ambitious scenario	Multinomial logit, random parameters logit, latent class model
	Vesterinen et al. (2010) (J)	1998-2000	Finnish coastal waters and lakes	Finland	Recreation (swimming, fishing, and boating)	TC	Water clarity	WTP for one water recreation day; increase in water clarity by 1 m would increase consumer surplus by 6% for swimmers, by 15% for fishermen, and by 0% for boating	Study uses national recreation inventory data
	Ahtiainen (2009) (J); Huhtala et al. (2009) (PR)	1994-2008	Baltic Sea	Whole Baltic region and US	Recreation, fisheries	Meta-analysis	n.a.	WTP per month: ~3.30-10€ for a 50% water quality improvement	Estimates the effect of e.g. income or the type of elicitation method on WTP
	Hyytiäinen et al. (2009)[a] (WP)	-	Finnish coastal waters	Finland	Recreation	CBA / TC, Meta-analysis	Water clarity / Secchi Depth	WTP (no per unit values available)	Integrated simulation model for assessing nutrient abatement policies
	Atkins and Burdon (2006)[a] (J); Atkins, Burdon & Allen (2007)[a] (J)	2003	Randers Fjord	Denmark	Recreation	CBA / CV	Secchi depth	WTP per month over ten years: ~12€ for increasing Secchi depth by 2.5-3m (~7.60€ without outliers)	-
	Soutukorva (2005) (WP)	1998-1999	Stockholm Archipelago	Sweden	Recreation	TC	Secchi depth	Aggregate consumer surplus: ~9.60-31 million € per year for a 1m increase in Secchi depth	Random utility model with conditional logit specification
	Kosenius (2004) (TH)	2003	Hanko, Gulf of Finland	Finland	Tourism, recreation, shellfish consumption / health	CV	Water quality: Reduction of harmful algal blooms	WTP per person per year for a 25% reduction in algae blooms and a 50% reduction in the risk of shellfish poisoning: ~24.90€	Focuses on benefits for tourism
	Olsson (2004) (WP)	2001	Swedish West Coast, Skagerrak, Kattegatt	Sweden	Recreational fishing	CV	Cod Stock	Median WTP for increasing the catch of cod per hour from 2kg to 100kg: ~17.30-28.80€	Comparison between open-ended questions and dichotomous choice and between tax and license fee
	Eggert and Olsson (2003) (WP)	2002	Swedish West Coast, Skagerrak, Kattegatt	Sweden	Recreation	CE	Fish stocks, bathing water quality & biodiversity level	WTP per month: ~13€ for avoiding reduction of biodiversity, ~5.60€ for improving biodiversity, ~5.60€ for improving water quality, and ~12.10€ for improving fish stocks	Multinomial logit, mixed multinomial logit model

Baltic Sea	Hökby & Söderqvist (2003) (J)	1995-1999	Baltic Sea	Sweden	Not specified	Meta-analysis of CV studies	n.a.	WTP per month: ~5.75-66€ (range from different studies)	Estimates income and price elasticities of demand for reduced eutrophication
	Söderqvist & Scharin (2000) (WP)	1998	Stockholm Archipelago	Sweden	Recreation	CV	Secchi depth	WTP per month: 4.10-6.80€ for 10 years to increase Secchi depth by 1m	-
	Markowska & Zylicz (1999)[a] (J)	1994	Baltic Sea	Sweden, Poland, Lithuania; BT to whole Baltic region	Not specified	CBA/CV & BT	Overall state of Baltic Sea	WTP for reaching a GEcS comparable to that of the 1960s (BDBP): 252 US$ in Sweden, 56 US$ in Poland, and 28 US$ in Lithuania	Use WTP and costs estimates to investigate cost-sharing for a public good in the case of the Baltic Sea (Chander-Tulkens model)
	Turner et al. (1999) (J)	1994	Baltic Sea	Sweden, Poland, Lithuania; BT to whole Baltic region	Not specified	CBA / CV & BT	Overall state of Baltic Sea	WTP per month for reaching a GEcS comparable to that of the 1960s (BDBP): 31-55.60€ in Sweden and 4-7.90€ in Poland	Interdisciplinary simulation study
	Frykblom (1998)[b] (TH)	-	Laholm Bay, Swedish West Coast	Sweden	Recreation	CV	Overall state of Laholm Bay	WTP per month: ~86.10€ for a 50% reduction in nutrient emissions	-
	Gren, Söderqvist & Wulff (1997) (J)	1994	Baltic Sea	Sweden and Poland; BT to whole Baltic region	Not specified	CBA / CV & BT	Overall state of Baltic Sea	WTP for reaching a GEcS comparable to that of the 1960s; WTP per month over 20 years: ~30€ in Sweden, ~3€ in Poland	Benefit transfer from Sweden to market economies and from Poland to formerly centrally planned economies
	Sandström (1996) (WP)	1990-1994	Laholm Bay, Swedish West Coast	Sweden	Recreation	TC	Secchi depth	Aggregate consumer surplus: 27-61 million € for a 50% reduction in nutrient load along the Swedish coastline	Random utility model with nested multinomial logit and conditional logit specifications
	Zylicz et al. (1995) (WP)	1994	Polish coastal waters	Poland	Recreation	CV	Dirty beaches & oxygen deficiency/ abundance of marine life	WTP per year for reaching a GEcS (BDBP): ~84 US$ per year	Scenario descriptions were adapted to Polish respondents because they were not familiar with the effects of eutrophication
North Sea	Longo et al. (2007)	2006	Belgian Coast	Belgium	Recreation	CE	Water quality: Amount and duration of algal blooms and foam	WTP: 16.39€ (8.40€) for a low (middle) level of foam, WTA: 24.79€ for a high quantity of foam	-
	Le Goffe (1995) (J)	1993	Brest Natural Harbor	France	Recreation, health / shell fish consumption	CV	Water quality	WTP per month: ~2.70€ for reducing eutrophication, ~2€ for risk-free bathing and shell fish consumption	Reduced eutrophication and contamination from other pollutants are considered

Black Sea	Taylor & Longo (2010) (J)	2006	Varna Bay	Bulgaria	Recreation	CE	Water quality: Visibility and duration of algal blooms	WTP per person: ~9.73€ for a program that entails no algal bloom	WTP decreases with duration of algal blooms and with decreasing visibility
	Knowler, Barbier & Strand (1997) (WP)	-	Black Sea	Black Sea littoral countries	Fishing	Production function	Anchovy stocks and catch	Annual increase in steady state harvest revenues: 2.25 million US$	Bioeconomic model with nutrients as input in natural production function
Mediterranean Sea	Torres, Riera & Garcia (2009) (J)	2006	Santa Ponça Bay, Mallorca	Spain	Recreation	CE	Water quality: clarity and duration of algal blooms	Bimonthly WTP per person (2nd home residents): 35.42€ (26.05€) for a low (medium) water transparency loss, 16.04€ (2.13€) for a low (medium) duration of the bloom	Conditional logit specification, results hint at a non-linear relationship between attribute levels and WTP, comparison between 1st and 2nd home residents
	Alberini, Zanatta & Rosato (2007) (J)	2002	Lagoon of Venice	Italy	Recreational fishing	TC (actual and contingent behavior)	Catch rate	Consumer surplus per person per year for a 50% increase in catch rates: 1,379€ for Venice residents, 745€ for others	Find that responses to contingent behavior questions are consistent with actual behavior
	Kontogianni et al. (2003)	1999	Thermaikos Bay	Greece	Recreation / not further specified	CV	Water quality	Mean WTP per month for five years (for operation of a wastewater treatment plant): 3.81€	Eutrophication and other pollution effects are considered together; open-ended questions

Own presentation. The table contains information from publications that look at the value of reduced eutrophication effects in European coastal and marine waters from 1990 to 2011. Only publications in English are considered.

[a] Information given only refers to the benefit part of the CBA.

[b] Information taken from a summary in SEPA (2008).

[c] Recreation includes activities such as sunbathing, swimming, boating, recreational fishing and enjoying the outside. However, this varies from study to study.

Abbreviations: J: Peer-reviewed journal publication, WP: Working or Discussion Paper, PR: Project Report, TH: PhD or Master`s Thesis, BT: Benefit transfer, CBA: Cost-Benefit-Analysis, CE: Choice Experiment, CV: Contingent Valuation, GEcS: Good ecological status, n.a.: not applicable, TC: Travel Cost, WTA: Willingness to accept, WTP: Willingness to pay.

Monetary values are given in current terms in Euros or in US$. Values reported in the studies have been converted to Euros if necessary using the following exchange rates: SEK 100 = EUR 11.35 and FRF 100 = EUR 15.24.

The second gap, which is mentioned in virtually all of the studies, is the missing link between nutrient loads and resulting effects on benefits. A viable CBA that analyzes the effects of reduced eutrophication would require the relationship between drivers and benefits to be established. So far, in the case of eutrophication, costs have mostly been expressed as cost per ton of nutrient reduction; and these costs depend on the kind of measures taken. Benefits, on the other hand, are expressed in terms of benefit for a certain quality increase.[13] Consequently, costs and benefits cannot be linked directly to the same improvement measures and are thus not directly comparable.

Since the work of the BDBP, many studies have assumed that a certain reduction of nitrogen (N) and/or phosphorus (P) discharges, mostly by 50%, will induce a certain good ecological status (GEcS) of the Baltic Sea, e.g. the one that persisted during the 1960s.[14] In these studies, people are asked for their maximal WTP to achieve this GEcS compared to the current condition. A viable comparison between costs and benefits would only be possible if a measure or a bundle of measures to achieve this GEcS could be defined. This would require the usage of detailed ecological models.

However, the linkages between pressure reduction and benefit effects can be complex and there may be interactions and feedback effects. Some work has been carried out to advance interdisciplinary research and to extend the degree of understanding of these issues (e.g. in Hyytiäinen et al., 2009). But Huhtala (2009) acknowledges that there are still gaps in the "understanding of key physical, chemical, and biological processes governing nutrient cycling in the Baltic Sea" and that knowledge is lacking to forecast the response of the environment to changes in nutrient loading. In addition, there is even less knowledge about eutrophication effects and links to benefits for the other European seas. However, exactly this type of knowledge is needed to fulfill the requirements of the MSFD to follow an ecosystem-based approach in the appraisal of improvement measures.

The third identified gap regards the types of benefits that are analyzed in the valuation studies. Apparently, most of them focus on recreational benefits. However, the activities subsumed under recreation vary across studies. Most valuation studies for Sweden, for example, ask respondents for their recreational activities including sunbathing, swimming, enjoying the outdoors and surfing as well as, e.g., recreational fishing. Other studies, only consider recreational fishing on its own (Olsson, 2004). This complicates the comparability of elicited

[13] In addition, the assessment of the WTP for reduced eutrophication is based on the change of one attribute, namely water clarity. The influence of other attributes is neglected unless these attributes are clearly mentioned and described and unless the corresponding scenarios are presented with the survey.
[14] This reduction target is in line with HELCOM regulations.

values between studies. Other effects on benefits, like health effects or effects on fisheries are not considered in most of the studies. In particular, there are no comprehensive studies that look at the effects of a certain change on all benefit categories.

The fourth identified gap concerns the categories of values (direct use values, indirect use values, option values, etc.) that are investigated. Many valuation studies mention the different value categories that are affected by reducing eutrophication. However, in the actual valuation exercise, they focus on direct non-consumptive use values by estimating recreational benefits. Direct use values related to fisheries and aquaculture or indirect use values related to health and climate effects are often neglected or only implicitly contained in people's valuation of the water quality change (see Figure 2). Moreover, non-use values are mostly not mentioned explicitly in the studies, though these values might be included in the results, depending on what the respondents thought of, when they answered the survey questions. The scope of benefits included in the valuation depends crucially on the scenario description provided to respondents.

In principle, the CV method is able to capture the TEV in the sense that people may express their WTP for a certain change in environmental quality taking into consideration a whole range of reasons. Söderqvist (1998) describes such reasons uttered by respondents taking part in the Swedish CV study that was part of the BDBP. His results indicate that the motive of about one third of respondents was related to the direct use of the Baltic Sea, either their own use, other people`s use or other people`s use in the future. Moreover, about 20% of respondents refer to human survival or human health, though this had not been mentioned in the scenario description of the questionnaire. This seems to indicate that most people attach a positive value to indirect use values and option values provided by the Baltic Sea.

5 Implications for the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD

5.1 Issues related to the economic requirements of the MSFD

The role of economics for the initial assessment

The EU WG ESA published a guidance document in December 2010 to clarify the role of economic analysis for the initial assessment (EC, 2010). This guidance document suggests two tools for the initial ESA, the Marine Water Accounts Approach and the Ecosystem Services Approach, without precluding further approaches. While the former approach focuses on financial costs and benefits accruing in economic sectors that directly use marine environments, the latter focuses on identifying ecosystem services provided by marine environments and the related benefits humans derive from these services, including non-use values. It is open to MSs to choose one of these or any other approach. In our opinion, the Marine Water Accounts Approach does not meet the requirements of the MSFD to follow an ecosystem-based approach. It is much too narrow and precludes important constituents of the TEV of marine ecosystem goods and services from the analysis. This in turn could undermine the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD.

The role of economics for determining GES

One important part of the MSFD is the definition of a GES based on scientific criteria such as physical and chemical features, habitat types, biological features and hydro-morphology. In addition, social and economic concerns should be taken into account (Art. 10.1 in connection with Annex IV, no. 9 MSFD). So far, however, socio-economic criteria have not been discussed in detail in the process of defining GES but rather as a separate issue, relevant above all for the initial assessment required by the MSFD. As a consequence of this separation, the definition of the GES will be based on expert knowledge and findings from natural sciences only. Thus, the environmental targets of the MSFD would be defined without taking into account optimality and efficiency criteria regarding the trade-off between environmental and socio-economic effects. Instead, the MSFD's intent to reach the GES by 2020 can be considered a political objective, based on insights from natural sciences irrespective of social and economic consequences. We do not argue that this would necessarily lead to wrong results. Still, it decreases the possibility to find efficient targets in the sense of a reasonable weighting of the related social costs and benefits.

The role of economics for the development of improvement measures

The overall aim of Art. 13 MSFD is to ensure that the chosen program of measures allows reaching the GES at least costs. CEA is a suitable tool to choose between a variety of proposed measures designed to achieve the same pre-defined target. This would be the case if the targets have been determined by GES indicators before selecting the measures. Only cost-effective measures or bundles of measures should then be considered for implementation. CBA, on the contrary, is a tool that allows prioritizing measures with different targets and different costs. It would thus be more suited to discuss measures and targets simultaneously. Therefore, more clarity of Art. 13 MSFD regarding the policy-decisions which are to be informed by the economic considerations is needed to choose the correct methodology (COWI, 2010).

However, even if targets are determined e.g. by GES indicators, CBA might still offer the opportunity to prioritize measures among regions and over time. It is, for example, possible to determine where and when welfare gains of measures will be highest. This is closely related to the economic analysis of the cost of degradation carried out during the initial assessment (COWI, 2010).

In addition, even if targets are determined before measures are chosen, so that CEA will be the main tool to choose among measures, each (cost-effective) measure that is considered for implementation would also have to be evaluated with the help of CBA if Art. 13.3 was interpreted literally. Measures would only have to be taken as long as benefits exceed costs by a certain amount. This also implies that the results of the CBA will be of particular importance to defend situations in which a MS intends to take no action to maintain or restore the GES.

The role of economics for the justification of exceptions

Another issue that needs further clarification is the role of economic analysis for the justification of exceptions due to disproportionate costs of measures – a problem that has been and still is prominent in the context of the WFD. Disproportionate costs as mentioned in Art. 14.4 MSFD can be verified by looking at the cost-benefit ratio (CBR) of measures or by comparing their net present values (NPVs). According to WFD guidelines, the CBR should significantly exceed the value one for granting exceptions. In the context of the WFD, use values were often sufficient to show that costs of measures were not disproportionate. In these

cases, it was not necessary to calculate non-use values to demonstrate that it was favorable to implement the measure under investigation. However, it is still unclear what a sufficient CBR is in the context of the MSFD to grant exceptions. Compared to the implementation of the WFD, this question gains importance in the context of the MSFD.

The reason for this is that information on costs and benefits related to measures to reach a GES of marine waters is scarce, and its inference is connected to large uncertainties. Particularly, this holds true for non-use values and indirect use values, which is important to consider, as indirect benefits from regulating services often constitute the largest share of the TEV (TEEB, 2009). Moreover, use values might even be less important in the context of the MSFD than in the context of the WFD, particularly for offshore areas. This implies that the valuation of non-use values may become necessary, which poses a far greater challenge for economic valuation exercises (Eftec/Enveco, 2010).

As a consequence, special attention should be given to the question if a valuation approach is able to capture the TEV and thus the total benefit of a certain improvement measure. In many cases, eliciting mechanisms tend to underestimate total benefits. This would favor the justification of exceptions and hinder environmental effectiveness of the MSFD. Consequently, qualitative data on benefits should be included in the decision-making process in order not to neglect the major components of the benefit. Moreover, this would call for an ecosystem service approach rather than just focusing on financial benefits in order to capture the whole value of marine protection measures.

It can be expected that this question will be discussed more intensely in the future during the implementation phase of the MSFD. In particular, it will be necessary to define an appropriate CBR during the political process. For cases where monetization of benefits does not seem sensible, other measures to weigh costs and benefits need to be developed and applied.

International cooperation

International cooperation will be much more important for the implementation of the MSFD than for the implementation of the WFD due to its regional coverage. The provisions of the WFD refer to river basins, which are mostly located within one country, though they may be shared by two or more countries. The MSFD, however, implies a substantially higher effort to account for cross-border effects as it refers to marine regions or subregions that are shared by a number of littoral countries (Eftec/Enveco, 2010).

The literature review in section 4.2 on eutrophication showed that valuation studies have mostly been carried out for single countries, predominantly in Scandinavian and Baltic countries. However, these studies often assume that eutrophication effects are to be alleviated by internationally coordinated action because action in one country would not be sufficient to reach a GEcS. Naturally, the studies do not provide details on how internationally concerted action is to be achieved and granted. But particularly the fact that the management of marine resources has to take into account trans-boundary effects and requires international cooperation increases the challenges posed by the MSFD.

Referring to the analysis of cost-effectiveness, for example, the question arises whether cost-effectiveness should only be assessed within one country or also across European countries. As has been demonstrated by empirical studies, for international environmental problems the same abatement goal can be achieved with considerably lower costs if cost-effectiveness is analyzed across countries (see e.g. Neumann and Schernewski, 2001). Moreover, measures taken in one country may be more efficient than the same measures taken in other countries. However, the spatial distribution and heterogeneity of costs and benefits related to improvement measures adds an additional dimension to the policy problem, calling for more intense international cooperation. In some cases this might also have to include international compensation schemes.

5.2 Issues related to the nature of environmental valuation

Incomplete representation of the TEV

This issue is touched upon in section 5.1 and underlined by the literature that we review in section 4.2. In particular, our review revealed that the existing valuation studies on eutrophication mostly focus on one category of benefits, namely the benefits generated by the cultural service recreation. Other possible effects of reducing eutrophication, e.g. those on fisheries and recreational fisheries, health, climate and transportation, are neglected. Moreover, most studies claim to follow the approach of TEV, yet the difficulties in identifying the effects on different value categories and in determining option and non-use values are only mentioned vaguely. Consequently, it is often not clear what people value when they answer questions in a stated preference survey (see e.g. Söderqvist, 1998).

This issue should be kept in mind also when measures to mitigate other pressures listed in the MSFD are analyzed. It would be important to investigate what would happen if one included hints on the different motives in the scenario descriptions of valuation studies. The question is

whether people's WTP would change if they were reminded of other people or future generations being able to use and enjoy the marine environment. This would shed more light on the question whether stated preference approaches really capture the whole TEV of pressure reductions. Moreover, it would thus affect the way in which the results of such studies could be used for CBA within the framework of the MSFD.

In this context, particular attention needs to be drawn to the concept of option value. Increasing economic activities coupled e.g. with higher nutrient emissions and pollution throughout the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea has led to higher vulnerability of the ecosystem (Turner et al., 1999). The question is how the option value of maintaining or restoring the GES of an intact marine environment should be elicited. In the study by Söderqvist (1998), 7% of the respondents stated that reducing eutrophication would be important for the future. Still, it is questionable whether this is sufficient to estimate an option value. Instead, the valuation of option values and indirect use values resulting from reducing the pressures listed in the MSFD should be subject to more scientific investigation from the natural science perspective.

Preference Uncertainty

Valuation studies are based on the assumption that people have well-defined preferences for the provisioning of ecosystem services, which exist independently of the experiment or survey being carried out. Empirical evidence however suggests that people are uncertain about their preferences (TEEB, 2010). Moreover, it is possible that preferences are formed only during the experiment or survey if people have not been aware of the problem at hand before.

Consequently, the question arises whether e.g. the mentioning of other people or future generations using the sea would elicit existing preferences or whether this would induce preferences that did not formerly exist. This issue is also important for determining the benefit of improving environmental conditions in open waters. The question is whether preference-related elicitation measures are appropriate to define the benefit of changes that are not experienced directly by people (Nunes, Ding, and Markandy, 2009). Eutrophication, for example, can lead to a wide area of "seafloor deserts" in open waters, where marine life is killed by oxygen depletion, lack of light and sedimentation. The question is whether people really value an amelioration of such conditions and, in addition, how economists should deal

with the problem that people are mostly unaware of such issues until they are confronted with them during the surveys.

On the other hand, there is evidence that people actually do value the existence of undisturbed ecosystems, particularly marine ecosystems. This becomes obvious e.g. via the large number of TV documentaries that is produced and watched by people. Consequently, at least part of the population has preferences regarding the importance of marine ecosystems and seems to attach positive values to their current and continuing existence.

Marginality, non-linearities, thresholds, and irreversebility

Decision-making in terms of CBA for project appraisal requires information on marginal changes of ecosystems. In the context of marine ecosystem services, this could be a small change in the area affected by eutrophication or a relatively small change in the water quality. Marginal analysis also requires information on the transition path the ecosystem might take if the current state is disturbed. In the case of a full coral reef system, for example, this transition path may be stepped, while it may be relatively smooth for the invasion of alien species into an area. Consequently, the impacts of human actions on ecosystem functioning might not be linear. For example, an ecosystem might seem unaffected by a human perturbation until a certain point is reached, which induces a sudden and drastic change in the state of an ecosystem. The assumption of linear behavior in economic analysis could thus lead to biased policy decisions if underlying ecological processes are indeed non-linear (Turner et al., 2010).

The possible existence of non-linearities is particularly important in the context of the initial assessment required by the MSFD, which shall also include the analysis of the possible costs of degradation if no action is taken to improve the conditions of the European seas. In this case, the costs of inaction could increase substantially if non-linear effects occurred in the behavior of marine ecosystems. The ecosystem-based approach mentioned in the MSFD would thus require taking such effects into account.

Moreover, it has become obvious in the study of ecosystems that thresholds may exist beyond which a drastic change in the state of an ecosystem occurs. Such a behavior is not compatible with marginal economic analysis, which assumes continuity of the benefit provision. Crossing these thresholds may in addition be irreversible if it is not possible to restore the initial state of the ecosystem. The possibility of triggering irreversible changes in ecosystems could support the demand for safe minimum standards. This would imply that a conservation option

should be taken if an irreversible effect on the ecosystem is probable unless the related costs of this option are regarded as unacceptable. The principle of safe minimum standards is thus based on minimizing the maximum possible loss, not on maximizing expected gains, as in CBA and risk analysis. Of course, it is open to discussion in which cases costs of conservation are unacceptable, particularly if one faces large uncertainties regarding future impacts of human uses on complex ecosystems. However, the imposition of safe minimum standards may provide one way of incorporating the precautionary principle into decision-making by choosing conservation measures even if there is no certainty about future damages (Ledoux and Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2010).

The MSFD mentions the precautionary principle and states that the programs of measures and the actions of the MSs should be based on it (Preamble, no. 26 and 44 MSFD). Still, the precautionary principle is only mentioned in the preamble of the MSFD and not in its main part, and there are no specific provisions that regulate its application.

5.3 Issues related to the knowledge about the natural science background and the interrelation with human well-being

Though natural science is starting to shed light on the functioning of ecosystems and the creation of ecosystem services, important links between ecosystem functioning, ecosystem services and human benefits are still poorly understood, which makes a robust CBA even more difficult (Bateman et al., 2011). One example is the role of biodiversity for ecosystem functioning and the provisioning of ecosystem services (TEEB, 2010). Uncertainty is even more prevalent in the context of marine ecosystem services, particularly those services which are not so visible and removed from people's direct experience, e.g. climate regulation (Remoundou et al., 2009).

This lack in knowledge complicates the implementation of the MSFD and the required economic valuation exercises. The design of CEs, for example, requires intense collaboration with natural scientists and a careful pilot phase to create realistic scenarios (Kosenius, 2010). Gren, Söderqvist, and Wulff (1997) describe the integrated tools and steps that would be necessary to obtain complete information and acknowledge that even for eutrophication there is no complete picture. So far, only some work has been carried out to advance interdisciplinary research on eutrophication and to extend the degree of understanding of these issues (Hyytiäinen et al., 2009). Moreover, the lack of comparable data across all seas still presents a major obstacle for pan-European marine assessments, even of well-known

problems such as eutrophication. More and better data are needed to develop a pan-European marine protection framework that addresses environmental issues in a cost-effective way (EEA, 2007).

For the example of eutrophication, the literature review in section 4.2 revealed that most of the studies on eutrophication are relatively old and that information is rather fragmented in geographical but also in methodological terms. New data is needed on the status of the European seas, on necessary nutrient load reductions and on the costs and benefits of these reductions to inform decision-making regarding the measures that need to be taken to reach GES. However, the literature on eutrophication is even further developed than the literature on waste, pollution, noise or other threats to the marine environment, which are also covered by the MSFD. Consequently, the MSFD poses a huge challenge for policy-makers and researchers.

In addition, there are complex interactions between the different pressures and target indicators listed in the MSFD. More research is needed to account for interrelations and feedback effects between them. Consequently, a detailed analysis is needed in order to determine the effect of a reduction of a certain pressure on the probability to reach an ecological target (Borja et al., 2010). Moreover, the measures taken to achieve a GES also need time to take effect. Such time lags have to be accounted for if a GES is to be achieved by 2020, as requested by the MSFD.

6 Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper is to present the economic requirements of the MSFD and to analyze which effects these requirements could have on the environmental effectiveness of the MSFD. To this end, we analyze the existing valuation literature, focusing on one of the most important threats to European marine and coastal waters: eutrophication. We assess and reconsider the approaches and applications of environmental valuation in combination with background knowledge from natural sciences, and take into account the ecosystem-based approach, which is required by the MSFD and based on the suggestions of MEA and TEEB.

To conclude, we state that the implementation of the MSFD requires more coordinated research, so that studies to evaluate benefits can be carried out across countries using comparable, state-of-the-art valuation methods. This could also include the combination of different valuation methods, e.g. of stated and revealed preference methods, to gain more reliable benefit estimates. Moreover, integrated modeling will be of utmost importance to link bio-geophysical and socio-economic systems and to trace the effects of changes in the marine environment to their impact on benefits.

Moreover, we identify a considerable risk that the MSFD might fail to achieve its environmental targets. In particular, the problems related to capturing all benefits related to pressure reductions in the marine context might induce an underestimation of the related benefits and a relative overestimation of the related costs. Consequently, the CBR defined to represent disproportionate costs should be high enough, i.e. at least higher than in the context of the WFD, to reduce the number of situations in which exceptions to implement improvement measures are granted even though benefits are underestimated. This becomes even more severe if one takes the possible but uncertain existence of non-linearities and threshold effects into account. This calls for a conservative approach when benefits and costs are weighted against each other. Where benefits cannot be monetized, economic analyses should be complemented by qualitative assessments.

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Appendix: Short summaries of the valuation studies contained in Table 2

Studies that value eutrophication effects in the Baltic Sea region

Besides the work of the BalticStern project, the results of which have not been published yet, the work by Kosenius (2010), Vesterinen et al. (2010), Ahtiainen (2009), and Hyytiäinen (2009) constitute the most recent approaches to evaluating eutrophication effects in the Baltic Sea.[15] A special focus of these studies is on the trans-boundary nature of eutrophication and on the benefits and costs of water quality improvements likely to occur in Finland.

Kosenius (2010) estimates the magnitude of benefits from three selected nutrient reductions in the Gulf of Finland for the Finnish people by applying a CE. The data were analyzed using three different econometric approaches, namely the multinomial logit (MNL), the random parameters logit (RPL) and the latent class (LCM) model. The paper incorporates natural science knowledge by using results from an ecological simulation model. Moreover, it takes into account that necessary reductions in nutrient loads will also have to take place in the neighboring countries, e.g. Estonia and Russia. However, the paper also acknowledges that there are still considerable knowledge gaps regarding the link between objective improvement of quality indices and the quality improvements as perceived by people as well as the actual link between quality attributes and actual nutrient reductions necessary to achieve certain quality improvements.

Vesterinen et al. (2010) utilize Finnish recreation inventory data combined with water quality data to model recreation participation and estimate the benefits of water quality improvements for the Finnish coast of the Baltic Sea as well as for Finnish lakes. The methods used are designed to account for the fact that water recreation activities in Finland mostly take place close to home. The smallest benefit estimates per trip per person ranged from approximately 6.30 to 8.30 € based on respondents` reported travel costs. Calculated travel costs for people traveling by car provided higher estimates, in the range of 18.90 to 19.00 € per visit per person. In both cases, the higher figures result from taking the opportunity cost of time into account. The work of Hyytiäinen (2009) is described in more detail below.

Atkins and Burdon (2006) examine the costs and benefits of reduced eutrophication in the Randers Fjord in Denmark[16]. Their work is based, inter alia, on a study by Nielsen et al.

[15] Huhtala et al. (2009) provide a recent meta-analysis of studies that value the impact of water quality changes on recreational activities related to the Baltic Sea. They also categorize and analyze the ecosystem services provided by the Baltic Sea and assess the feasibility of CBA in the context of selected examples. Moreover, they present a prototype stochastic simulation model for projecting the development of nutrient budgets, damages from eutrophication, and the costs of abatement activities in the Baltic Sea.

[16] Updated results are presented in Atkins, Burdon and Allen (2007).

(2003), which provides the natural science foundation to determine reference conditions of the Fjord to define its GEcS according to the WFD. The costs of achieving the GEcS are borne predominantly by Danish farmers. The study presents some cost estimates for reducing nutrient loads from the implementation of former action plans as well as cost estimates from a study by Gren (2000). The focus of the study is on assessing individual preferences for water quality improvements in the Fjord by carrying out a CV study. The paper only evaluates the benefit for recreationalists derived from higher water transparency. Benefits for recreational anglers from possibly increased catches are mentioned but not evaluated.

Like Kosenius (2010), Eggert and Olsson (2003) employ a CE to value changes in the state of the Baltic Sea. They consider the waters along the Swedish West Coast and use the attributes biodiversity, fish stocks and bathing water quality. The WTP for improving fish stocks refers to an increase in per hour catch from 2kg to 100kg of cod. The WTP for improving water quality refers to reducing the number of beaches that fail to pass standards from 12% to 5%. In particular, they note that the WTP to avoid the reduction of biodiversity from a medium to a low level (~160€) is higher than the WTP to improve biodiversity from a medium to a high level (~68€). Olsson (2004) carries out a CV study for evaluating the benefits of improved cod stocks along the Swedish West coast. The WTP for improving cod stocks refers to an increase in per hour catch from 2kg to 100kg of cod, as in Eggert and Olsson (2003).

Söderqvist and Scharin (2000) estimate recreational benefits of reduced eutrophication in the Stockholm archipelago by applying the CV method. Sight depth was used as an indicator for water quality. Soutukorva (2005) examines how improved water quality affects the demand for recreation in the same region, also using sight depth as an indicator for water quality. Benefits from reduced eutrophication are elicited using the TC method combined with estimating a RUM. Sandström (1996) also uses the TC method to elicit the benefits from reduced eutrophication along the Swedish coast and applies a RUM based on data gathered from the Swedish tourism and travel data base (TDB). The latter addresses the link between sight depth and nutrient loads by running a simple regression of sight depth on water temperature as well as P and N concentrations. However, he acknowledges that this relationship should rather be established by natural scientists to account more accurately for the effects of changing nutrient concentrations on sight depth.

The remaining primary studies date back to the year 2000 or earlier and were carried out mostly in the context of the Baltic Drainage Basin Project (BDBP). The BDBP followed an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates natural sciences and socio-economic aspects to

evaluate the cost and benefits of reducing nutrient loads and thus eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. Nutrient loads are modeled using geographical information systems (GIS) for the whole drainage basin of the Baltic Sea. The link to nutrient concentrations in the Baltic Sea is established empirically by analyzing historical data. Cost-effective bundles of measures are defined for nutrient-reduction policies. Benefits were estimated using CV and TC methods in Poland and Sweden. These estimates were then transferred to other countries within the drainage basin to estimate basin-wide benefits. These were compared to basin-wide costs. The results are based on the assumption that a 50% reduction in N and P loads will restore a GEcS of the Baltic Sea comparable to that during the 1960s (Turner et al., 1995; Gren, Söderqvist, and Wulff, 1997; Markowska and Zylicz, 1999, Turner et al., 1999).

Zylicz et al. (1995) present the CV studies carried out in Poland. They use the number of dirty beaches as well as the abundance of marine life due to oxygen supply in the water as quality indicators to describe the state of the Baltic Sea. The reason for this is that they found that Polish people are not very familiar with eutrophication effects. However, this somehow biases results, as beach closures may also be due to other causes besides eutrophication. Markowska and Zylicz et al. (1999) use the results of the CV studies carried out in the course of the BDBP to investigate how costs should be shared optimally between littoral states if the Baltic Sea was considered a public good, based on national abatement cost curves for reducing N input and national WTP to reduce eutrophication. Subsequently, theoretical transfers between countries are compared to actual transfers. The study compares annual costs of reaching a 50% reduction in N discharges to the annual WTP for international clean-up action.

Some studies have reviewed the economic valuation literature on marine and coastal ecosystem services and carried out meta-analyses and meta-regressions. Ledoux and Turner (2002), for example, present the concept of TEV as a basis for valuing environmental goods and services as well as valuation methods and problems related to valuation. Moreover, they provide a broad overview of valuation studies dealing with marine and coastal ecosystem goods and services and exemplify this by a couple of case studies including the results from the BDBP. Ahtiainen (2009) presents a meta-analysis covering studies on water quality changes in the Baltic Sea and the adjacent drainage basin as well as in the United States to estimate e.g. the effects of income or the type of elicitation method on the WTP for enhanced water quality. The final data set consists of 32 studies and 54 observations. Hökby and Söderqvist (2003) carry out a meta-analysis, estimating particularly income and price elasticities of the demand for reduced eutrophication in Sweden. They state that “none of the [single] CV studies […] is advanced enough in itself to make an estimation of a demand

function possible". The reason for this is that CV settings mostly do not allow for a choice between different combinations of price and quantity. They assume (based on Gren, Söderqvist, and Wulff, 1997) that a 50% reduction in nutrient loads is consistent with the scenarios described by the five valuation studies on which they base their meta-analysis. Furthermore they assume that such a reduction leads to concentration levels similar to those prevailing during the 1950s. However, there are considerable uncertainties related to this, including the possibility of non-linearities (Hökby and Söderqvist, 2003).

Hyytiäinen et al. (2009) is a recent approach to integrating knowledge from natural and social sciences. They present an integrated simulation model that incorporates the stochastic development of water quality, the underlying ecological processes as well as the relevant economic activities in the area and the possible economic benefits to be gained from water quality improvements in Finland and neighboring countries. Concerning drivers, the model focuses on nutrient inputs from agriculture. The paper presents the structure of the model as well as an application with preliminary parameters. Nutrient emissions in neighboring countries are included in the model. Benefits of reducing eutrophication are obtained from other studies, which use the TC method and meta-analysis. Travel cost data is based on the work of Vesterinen et al. (2010). This information is used to construct functions that connect benefits derived from reduced eutrophication to water clarity. Results indicate that the benefits of engaging in activities to decrease eutrophication would only exceed costs for Finland if neighboring countries also engaged in such abatement activities.

Studies that value eutrophication effects in the North Sea region

Le Goffe (1995) carried out one of the few studies that value eutrophication effects in the North Sea. He considers reduced eutrophication and microbial contamination in Brest Natural Harbor in France and reports WTP for reducing eutrophication (effects on recreation) and WTP for risk-free bathing and shellfish consumption (health effects), respectively. Thus he captures direct and indirect use values; however, they result from different pressure reductions. He used a CV approach with open-ended WTP questions and payment cards.

Longo et al. (2007) carry out a CE to value the effects of eutrophication on recreational activities along the Belgian coast. This study is part of the Thresholds project, which also foresees similar valuation studies in the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean Sea (see

below)[17]. The attributes used in the Belgian CE are i.) the extent of algal blooms and the quantities of foam on the beach, ii.) the duration of algal blooms, iii.) and the congestion of the beaches. Longo et al. (2007) also present several sources from which threshold effects could arise when eutrophication is considered. However, these thresholds are not explicitly mentioned in the valuation study.

Studies that value eutrophication effects in the Mediterranean Sea region

Torres, Riera, and Garcia (2009) carry out a CE to value the effects of eutrophication on recreational activities in Santa Ponça Bay, Mallorca, Spain. The attributes used in the Spanish CE are similar to those used in Longo et al. (2007) but specifically adapted to conditions in Santa Ponça Bay. The attributes used are i.) water transparency, ii.) the duration of algal blooms, iii.) and the congestion of the beaches. There is no direct link to the reduction in nutrient inputs needed to achieve the water quality improvements described in the CE.

Alberini, Zanatta, and Rosato (2007) consider recreational fishing in the Lagoon of Venice in the Mediterranean Sea. They use the TC method to estimate the increase in consumer surplus resulting from a 50% increase in catch rates, achieved by reduced pollution. In particular, Alberini, Zanatta, and Rosato (2007) use actual data and compare them to contingent behavior data, which they elicited via questionnaires. They do not find a significant difference between actual and contingent data.

Kontogianni et al. (2003) consider the case of a wastewater treatment plant in Thessaloniki, Greece. They elicit the people`s WTP for maintaining this plant, which would induce water quality improvements in the adjacent Thermaikos Bay. Kontogianni et al. (2003) use the CV method with open-ended elicitation questions.

Studies that value eutrophication effects in the Black Sea region

Taylor and Longo (2010) carry out a CE to value the effects of eutrophication on recreational activities in Varna Bay, Bulgaria. The attributes used in the Bulgarian CE are similar to those used in Longo et al. (2007) but specifically adapted to conditions in Varna Bay. Theattributes used are i.) water clarity and visibility, ii.) the duration of algal blooms, iii.) and the congestion of the beaches. There is no direct link to the reduction in nutrient inputs needed to

[17] Within the Thresholds project, it is also planned to estimate the costs for reducing nutrient emissions both from agriculture and wastewater treatment (Longo et al., 2007).

achieve the water quality improvements described in the CE. Taylor and Longo (2010) state that there is a lack of scientific models that accurately predict algal blooms.

Knowler, Barbier and Strand (1997) construct a bioeconomic model to link nutrient concentrations in the Black Sea with anchovy stocks via the prevalence of an exotic predatory Jellyfish species. They consider the impact of changing nutrient concentrations on steady state solutions in an open access regime, in particular the effect on anchovy harvest, which represents the direct use value generated by the anchovy stocks.