



# Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021–2030



Maritime spatial planning



October 2021



# Contents

|                                                                                                                                                                              |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preamble .....                                                                                                                                                               | 5  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE 1</b> — Implementation of MSPs builds knowledge base for the new MSP cycle .....                                                                                | 6  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE 2</b> — Maritime Spatial Planning improves regional policy coherence .....                                                                                      | 7  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE 3</b> — Maritime Spatial Planning contributes to achieving progress towards good environmental status of the Baltic Sea set in the Baltic Sea Action Plan ..... | 8  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE 4</b> — Maritime Spatial Planning contributes to sustainable blue economy .....                                                                                 | 9  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE 5</b> — Spatial planning contributes to climate change mitigation, adaptation and increased resilience of the Baltic Sea Region .....                           | 10 |
| Follow up of the Roadmap implementation .....                                                                                                                                | 11 |

Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group  
(HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG)

Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission  
(Helsinki Commission – HELCOM)  
[www.helcom.fi](http://www.helcom.fi)

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea  
(VASAB)  
[www.vasab.org](http://www.vasab.org)

For bibliographic purposes this document should be cited as:  
“Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030.  
HELCOM-VASAB (2021)”

© HELCOM-VASAB (2021)

All rights reserved. Information included in this publication or extracts thereof, with the exception of images and graphic elements that are not HELCOM's own and identified as such, may be reproduced without prior consent on the condition that the complete reference of the publication is given as stated above.

Photo: Adobe Stock





# Preamble

Adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021 and the VASAB CSPD/BSR 85<sup>th</sup> meeting, committed to the implementation of the Roadmap.

## REGIONAL BALTIC MSP ROADMAP 2021-2030

**AWARE** of the high and rapidly increasing demand for maritime space and increasing multiple pressures on marine environment and resources and **RECOGNIZING** the urgent need for increasing resilience to the changing climate in the Baltic Sea region.

**RECALLING** that Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is a continuous participatory process of analysing and allocating spatial distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives, as well as to minimize conflicts between the sea uses.

**NOTING** that MSP is a cyclical and adaptive process that fosters adaptation to emerging needs and challenges, such as the climate change and a sustainable use of marine resources in the context of the circular economy and the sustainable blue economy.

**RECALLING** that the ecosystem-based approach is applied in MSP and thus contributes to achieving the Good Environmental Status of the Baltic Sea.

**RECOGNIZING** the valuable work done by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group since 2010 as the renowned regional Baltic Sea platform on Maritime Spatial Planning and **ENCOURAGING** the continuation of cooperation.

**RECALLING** the HELCOM-VASAB Baltic Sea broad-scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles adopted by HELCOM and VASAB CSPD/BSR in 2010 and the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap 2013-2020 adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2013 and endorsed by VASAB Ministerial Conference in 2014.

**RECOGNIZING** the joint effort by the Baltic Sea countries to draw up and apply maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and that the joint efforts have contributed to fulfilment of the Regional MSP Roadmap 2013-2020.

**TAKING NOTE** of the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and its update, VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP), the EU directive on a framework for maritime spatial planning, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy. **TAKING FURTHER NOTE** of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, Paris Agreement and EU Green Deal to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

**EMPHASISING** that the focus of the regional MSP collaboration is now shifting from drawing up of the plans to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up with subsequent eventual reviewing of the maritime spatial plans (MSPs).

**CONFIDENT** and **COMMITTED** to implement this Roadmap that will support the achievement of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Framework and HELCOM and VASAB goals, strategies and policies.



The goal of the Roadmap is strengthening the joint effort and coherence throughout the Baltic Sea Region to implement Maritime Spatial Plans, aiming for sustainable development of the region and building a sound basis for an adaptive Maritime Spatial Planning process applying the ecosystem-based approach.





# Objectives



## OBJECTIVE 1 — Implementation of maritime spatial plans builds knowledge base for the new MSP cycle

The Baltic Sea countries collaborate in the monitoring and evaluation of their Maritime Spatial Planning processes. Special consideration will be given to the application of the ecosystem-based approach and the precautionary principle. The maintenance of an up-to-date knowledge data-base and the application of modern analysis tools are an important aspect of this work. The Baltic Sea countries strive to move towards coherence of approaches to monitoring and evaluation, the improvement of assessment practices to build a regional MSP knowledge base and the capacity of MSP practitioners and decision-makers.



## Joint actions to support implementation and follow-up of the MSPs in relation to the regional MSP framework:

**1.1** Develop a guiding framework to support harmonized evaluation of MSPs, including a set of definitions:

- *Output: BSR evaluation framework for MSPs; common set of general definitions ("Implementation", "Knowledge Base", "MSP Cycle", "Coherent MSP", "monitoring, assessment, evaluation", etc.), year 2023.*

**1.2** Develop and share a concise and descriptive overview on national plans' implementation (what does implementation mean in different countries; where/when do they impact on decisions on certain projects, spatial and temporal management of activities etc.):

- *Output: overview on national MSPs implementation, if possible, inclusion in established country fiches that would have a dedicated section, 2025 and 2028.*

**1.3** Develop a regional follow up system on MSP, including monitoring of implementation at the Baltic Sea level:

- *Output: BSR follow-up system of implementation of MSPs, 2027.*



## Joint actions to develop the knowledge base of the MSP:

**1.4** Facilitate exchange of information on the best practices of MSP implementation, monitoring and evaluation across the BSR and other sea basins:

- *Output: Regular exchange in HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group;*
- *Output: Conference (ca. 2023 – 2025) on Implementation of MSP in the BSR with input from other regions;*
- *Output: MSP Planners Forum acting on the regular base.*

**1.5** Analyse and support spatial efficiency by comparing approaches and solutions with regard to spatial use (e.g., exclusive vs multi use of space) and conflicts management:

- *Output: Report on best practices/cases and recommendations on spatial efficiency and good examples of multi-use, 2027.*

**1.6** Improve MSP related data retention and flows and assuring data actuality. Ensure regional compatibility of the MSP Input and Output Data and strengthen mutual cooperation in broader context, especially EU:

- *Output: MSP Output data is available in BASEMAPS, by 2022;*
- *Output: Shortlisting of MSP input data themes to be regularly updated in regional portal, including climate change related spatial data, 2022;*
- *Output: Overview on national MSP data portals, 2025;*
- *Output: continuously exchange the best practices in MSP related data handling with MSP data platforms beyond the Baltic Sea region.*

**1.7** Establishing of links with relevant scientific frameworks and maritime knowledge; support the education of MSP planners and international educational exchange:

- *Output: Regular consideration of recent scientific developments at regional MSP related events; contributing to regional MSP science and educational needs.*





## OBJECTIVE 2 — Maritime Spatial Planning improves regional policy coherence

This Roadmap will lead the Baltic Sea countries through a new planning cycle when the implementation of adopted maritime spatial plans will be taking place. In general, this will be a period of evaluation of national MSP frameworks and regional co-operation. Therefore, in particular it is crucial to understand implications from targets of other national, regional and EU level (e.g., Green deal) policies to the achievements of targets set in maritime spatial plans.



### Actions to achieve the objective in regard to enhancing collaboration between MSP authorities and stakeholders on the implementation of maritime spatial plans and for the development of MSP policy framework:

**2.1** The Baltic Sea countries' MSP authorities continue close collaboration:

- *Output: Continuous dialogue utilizing various regional platforms, e.g., HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, MSP Planners Forum.*

**2.2** Use the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group as a platform for cooperation of MSP authorities with other HELCOM bodies and stakeholders to establish a common understanding on how MSP can contribute to regional goals:

- *Output: continuous dialogue with sectors utilizing various regional platforms.*

**2.3** Enhance Baltic sea level collaboration of MSP authorities and planners with various sectors to contribute to aligning sectoral policies and sectoral decision-making and by raising awareness on the role of MSP between involved stakeholders:

- *Output: regular regional events, e.g., Baltic MSP forum.*

**2.4** Further develop institutional framework for the intergovernmental collaboration on MSP in the BSR:

- *Output: review Baltic Sea regional "Guidelines on transboundary consultations, public participation and co-operation" by 2026.*



### Actions to achieve the objective in regard to improving the understanding of MSP's relationship with other policy frameworks, including land-sea interaction:

**2.5** Explore good practices and application of planning and policy instruments for coordination of land-sea interactions across different levels and sectors:

- *Output: report on good practices addressing land-sea interactions by 2022.*

**2.6** Study the relationship between various policies related to protection and sustainable use of marine resources by continuously following national MSP implementation as well as other related processes concerning marine and coastal domain (e.g., European Green Deal, Sustainable Blue Economy, Offshore renewable energy and Biodiversity strategies, etc.)

- *Output: supplement country fiches with relevant information by 2025.*

**2.7** Utilise the prominent role of coordinating Policy Area "Spatial Planning" within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) to improve cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation across the BSR and contributing to its objectives:

- *Output: HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group acts as the Steering Group for MSP within the EUSBSR Policy Area "Spatial Planning".*



**OBJECTIVE 3 — Maritime Spatial Planning contributes to achieving progress towards good environmental status of the Baltic Sea set in the Baltic Sea Action Plan**

Maritime Spatial Planning applies an ecosystem-based approach with an aim to reduce environmental pressures of sea-based human activities on the Baltic Sea ecosystem and to strengthen protection and restoration of marine species and habitats. Hereby contributing to achieving Good Environmental Status (GES), supporting implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) as well as the EU Biodiversity strategy 2030. This objective focuses on extended integration between MSP and environmental management and development of common impact assessment frameworks and review of Guidelines for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea area (EBA-guidelines).



**Actions to achieve the objective in regard to new and updated guidelines and methods to apply an Ecosystem Based Approach (EBA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures in MSP:**

**3.1** Update the EBA-guidelines based on shared experiences in national application of the ecosystem-based approach in MSP and the evaluation of EBA implementation in the latest MSP-round and other relevant input:

- *Output: updated EBA-guidelines, 2025.*

**3.2** Develop a Baltic SEA-framework including themes, common data, assessment methods for impact evaluation, cross-border consultations:

- *Output: Follow-up on the sharing of environmental information and stakeholder participation as part of international consultations and the Baltic MSP Espoo procedures as carried out for the current MSPs, 2022;*
- *Output: Baltic SEA-framework to improve compatibility of SEA practices and results, 2025.*



**Actions to achieve the objective in regard to achieving better understanding on how MSP can contribute to the achievement of GES and other conservation targets:**

**3.3** Establish cooperation between HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and HELCOM STATE and CONSERVATION and relevant HELCOM bodies to develop common language and views on Ecosystem based management and green infrastructure, cumulative assessment methods, spatial data, status assessments:

- *Output: regular cooperation process involving HELCOM-VASAB MSP, State and Conservation and relevant bodies, starting with a joint meeting with State and Conservation in 2022.*

**3.4** Identify how MSP can support conservation and sustainable use in equitable way reflecting marine protected areas (MPAs) and possible Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) or other areas of high natural values in maritime spatial plans (as a basis for steering harmful activities away from such areas) and identify possibilities for MSP to support the BSAP targets related to protected areas as well as national and regional strategies.

- *Output: Development of Green Infrastructure maps including ecosystem services based on HOLAS III, 2025;*
- *Output: Additional section in country fiches demonstrating how MSP supports conservation and sustainable use, 2023.*

**3.5** Promote the use of methods and tools in MSP for assessing cumulative environmental and other impacts of sea-based activities:

- *Output: Stocktake and review of the existing methods and tools, 2022;*
- *Output: Harmonised approaches for cumulative impacts assessments, 2026.*

**3.6** Evaluate how MSPs are supporting the overarching goals of the MSFD and thereby contributing to deliver to good environmental status:

- *Output: Report on MSP's impact on the implementation of the MSFD, including programmes of measures and achieving GES, 2026.*





#### **OBJECTIVE 4 — Maritime Spatial Planning contributes to sustainable blue economy**

MSP is part of a framework for sustainable ocean economy development. A sustainable blue economy provides social and economic benefits and equitable MSP for current and future generations and restores, protects and maintains the diversity, productivity, resilience, core functions, and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems, and is based on clean technologies, renewable energy, and circular material flows.



#### **Actions to achieve the objective:**

**4.1** Share experiences in guiding sectoral development to minimize economic losses and the weakening of ecosystem services, identify actions that can be enhanced on the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) level through implementation of MSP and apply them in the view of sustainable blue economy, including cross-border perspective:

- *Output: Report/Guiding document on good practices for sectoral sustainable development, 2026.*

**4.2** Investigate the linkage between environmental and social-economic dimensions through an ecosystem services analysis with cross-border MSP perspective:

- *Output: joint analysis of ecosystem services in relation to MSP in order to achieve sustainable blue economy, 2027.*

**4.3** Encourage participatory and transparent processes with all stakeholders of sea use to ensure successful integrated and holistic MSP and management towards sustainable blue economy:

- *Output: An overview of MSP impacts on progress towards sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea Region, including contribution to the SDGs 2030, 2025.*

**4.4** Update the future oriented report on marine and maritime activities and developments of Baltic Sea regional importance:

- *Output: Updated future-oriented report on marine and maritime activities and developments, 2028.*





## **OBJECTIVE 5 — Spatial planning contributes to climate change mitigation, adaptation and increased resilience of the Baltic Sea Region**

Climate change is a global challenge which has to be addressed in MSP. There is a need to get a better joint understanding of how sectors and the marine environment will be affected by climate change and to strengthen the role of MSP to adapt to climate change and contribute to measures of climate change mitigation.



### **Actions to achieve the objective:**

**5.1** Explore how MSP related sectors will be affected by climate change including how climate change might impact human activities under different future scenarios, aiming at developing MSP-strategies for increasing capacity of different sectors to adapt to expected climate change impacts:

- *Output: A discussion paper as guidance for strategic ways for integrating climate change adaptation into MSP for the next planning cycle, 2025, coordinate timing with mid-term evaluations of national adaptation strategies.*

**5.2** Explore how MSP can contribute to climate change mitigation and nationally determined contribution in terms of Paris Agreement, including NECPs and relevant national strategies:

- *Output: Stocktaking national experiences - an overview published by 2025.*

**5.3** Identify how MSP can support adaptive conservation strategies to cater for spatial changes in ecosystems (e.g., migration of species, change of critical conditions for habitats), including the further exploration of the potential for including climate refugia in MSP for the entire Baltic Sea:

- *Output: Information document on MSP's role in adaptative conservation strategies, including best practices, 2026;*
- *Output: Modelled maps of climate change impact on marine ecosystem (depending on availability of spatial data on climate change impacts), 2026.*



# Follow-up of the Roadmap implementation

**2024–2025**

**Interim assessment of the progress in the Roadmap implementation.**

Evaluation of the Roadmap implementation progress, compilation of national data and discussion with possible correction of the deadlines and deliverables. Related themes are discussed at the Conference on Implementation of MSP in the BSR.

**During 2028**

**Sound basis for an adaptive Maritime Spatial Planning process applying the ecosystem-based approach is built.**

Check-up of the state of all Roadmap outputs and documents constituting regional MSP framework. Final correction of the Roadmap and identification of final steps to achieve its objectives.

**By 2030**

**Final assessment of the regional MSP framework and achievement of the Roadmap goal and objectives.**

Final stocktaking of the availability of the Roadmap outputs, evaluation of the state of the regional MSP framework, conclusion on the achievement of the Roadmap goals and objectives, recommendations for the new cycle of MSPs development and the Roadmap update.

**Plan for adoption of regional MSP framework documents:**

Update of the “Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea area”, 2025.

Update of the “Guidelines on transboundary consultations, public participation and co-operation” by 2026.