Country Fiche

Latvia

Updated March 2023

Content

1.General information

- Marine area under Latvian jurisdiction includes inland sea waters, Territorial sea (12 nautical miles from the baseline) and exclusive economic zone (EEZ).
- Total area of Baltic Sea (including Gulf of Riga) under jurisdiction of Latvia is about 28,500 km^2, covering 668 km^2 of inland sea waters, 10 178 km^2 of Territorial Sea and 17 656 km^2 of EEZ.
- Marine area of Latvia borders with Lithuania, Estonia and Sweden.

1.1.Governance

Latvian marine area is owned by the state and the responsibility is divided between respective sectorial ministries (Environment, Agriculture, Transport, and Economics). Recently the competence of planning and management of 2 km zone seawards from coastline has been given to local municipalities. Relevant authority for maritime spatial planning is Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

1.2.Contacts

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2.General information on legislation

The legal base for MSP is laid down in the Spatial Development Planning Law enforced on 1 December, 2011. It gives the definition of the maritime spatial plan and deadline for starting elaboration of the MSP. Regulations of the Cabinet of the Ministers Nr. 740 on Development, Implementation and Monitoring of Maritime Spatial Plan have been approved by the Latvian Government in 2012, where the content, elaboration procedure, as well as implementation and monitoring procedures of MSP are defined. The MSP has been submitted and announced through ordinary legislative procedures according to the Rules of Procedures of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Government shall approve the MSP.

Marine Environment Protection and Management Law enforced on 18 November 2010 defines the maritime spatial planning as a long-term process for development planning aimed at protection of marine environment, rational use of the sea and integrated management, as well as balancing the social welfare and economic development with the environmental protection requirements. The Law states the necessity of maritime spatial planning and requires applying ecosystem approach, including featuring of the characteristics of the Baltic Sea, as well to take into account marine environmental status and trends.

Other relevant laws: Maritime Administration and Marine Safety Law; Fishery Law; Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories; Law on Protection Belts; Law on Protection of Cultural Monuments; Law on Subterranean Depths, Law on National Armed Forces, Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, Law on Land Management etc. Sectoral areas on various environmental policy issues of the sea are regulated by the Regulations of Cabinet of the Ministers.

Maritime Spatial Planning is developed taking into consideration the international liabilities of the Republic of Latvia and in cooperation with countries, with which Latvia has common sea border.

Maritime Spatial Plan of Latvia is a national level long-term (up to 12 years) spatial development planning document that defines the use of the sea until 2030, considering the terrestrial part that is functionally interlinked with the sea and co-ordinating interests of various sectors and local governments in use of the sea.

In order to systematically evaluate environmental implications of the proposed maritime spatial plan, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is compulsory to undertake for maritime spatial plans according to the law on “Environmental Impact Assessment’’ and Cabinet Regulations of 23 March 2004 Nr. 157 “Procedure for implementation of the strategic environmental impact assessment”, set out in the Act on the Assessment of Environmental Impacts under the requirements of the Directive 2011/42/EC of the European Parliament.

3.General applicability (e.g. territorial Sea, EEZ, other distinctions)

The above mentioned MSP and legislation applies to all territory of Latvia, including inland sea waters, territorial sea and EEZ.

4.Spatial Plans

4.1.Title of Maritime Spatial Plan: MARITIME SPATIAL PLAN 2030.

The maritime Spatial Plan for the Marine Inland Waters, Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Waters of the Republic of Latvia.

National level long-term spatial development planning document.

4.1.1.Legal basis

The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 was approved by the Government on 21.05.2019. It is available in English on the website of Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Government - http://www.varam.gov.lv/eng/darbibas_veidi/maritime_spatial_planning/.

4.1.2.Legal impact

The national MSP consists of four parts: **the explanatory part, strategic section, description of the permitted use of the sea and the graphical part**:

1. ***Explanatory part***, which includes an assessment of the current situation and trends, covering:

1.1. Relations of the marine plan to other planning documents and legislation;

1.2. Information on MSP area

1.3. Current situation and sectoral interests of shipping, energy, defence, fishery, tourism and recreation, extraction of mineral resources, biological diversity, cultural heritage, landscape values, climate change, ecosystem services.

2. ***Strategic part***, which includes:

2.1. Long-term vision of the development of the use of the sea.

2.2. Three strategic objectives.

3. ***Description of the permitted use of the sea***, which includes:

3.1. MSP solutions, including main conditions for planning the development in marine waters and conceptual framework defining categories of permitted use.

3.2. Conditions for marine use of each category and types of use and recommendations for granting permits to new activities in the areas of general use.

3.3. Implementation of MSP with tasks to achieve the three strategic objectives.

3.4. Monitoring of the implementation of MSP and updating the MSP.

4. ***Graphical part***, which is made up of a map on permitted use of the sea and thematic maps.

4.1.3.Area covered

The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 has been developed for the entire part of the Baltic Sea under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Latvia up to the outer border of the exclusive economic zone. Total area of Baltic Sea (including Gulf of Riga) under jurisdiction of Latvia is about 28,500 km2, covering 668 km2 of inland sea waters, 10 178 km2 of Territorial Sea and 17 656 km2 of EEZ.

4.1.4. Historic development

Development of MSP for whole Baltic Sea area under Latvian jurisdiction was started in 2014 when a national MSP coordination group was established and in 2019 national MSP was adopted. Elaboration of the plan was led by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The process of several drafts and stakeholder involvement is schematically displayed in the timeline below (Figure 1).

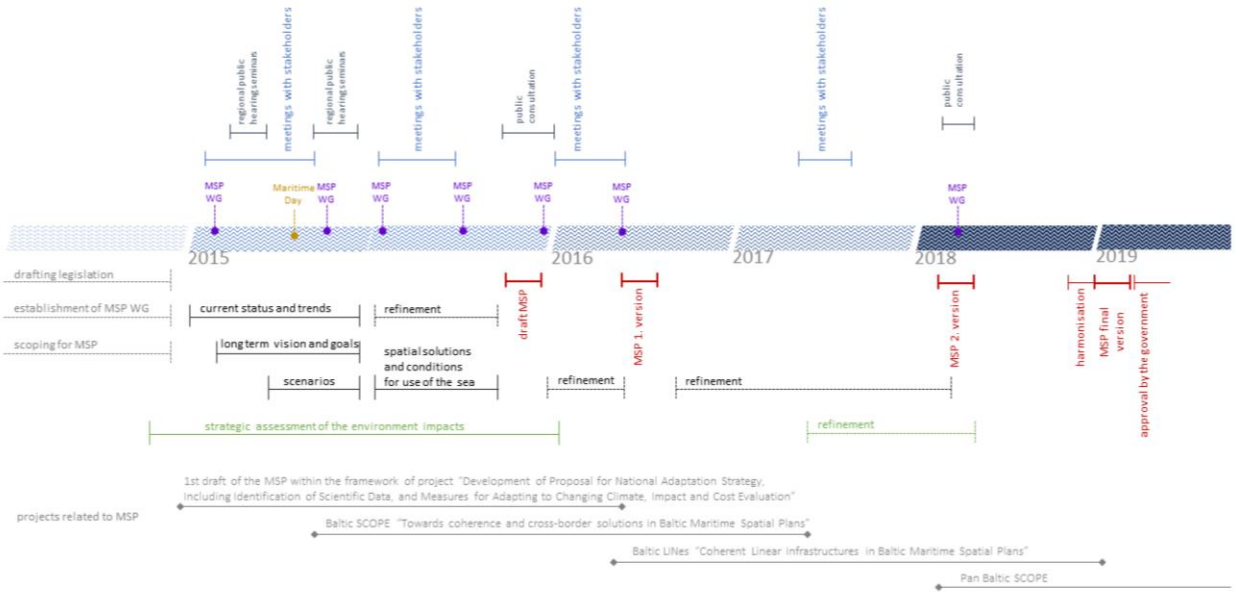

Figure 1. Progress of Latvia's MSP elaboration

4.1.5.Objectives of the plan

There are three strategic objectives (SO) in the MSP:

- SO1: Rational and balanced use of the marine space, preventing inter-sectoral conflicts and preserving free space for future needs and opportunities;

- SO2: The marine ecosystem and its ability to regenerate is preserved, ensuring the protection of biological diversity and averting excessive pressure from economic activities;
- SO3: Integrated use of marine and terrestrial areas by promoting development of maritime related businesses and the development of the required infrastructure.

Interrelations of MSP strategic objectives, strategic priorities, long-term vision and spatial solutions is shown in the figure below (Figure 2).

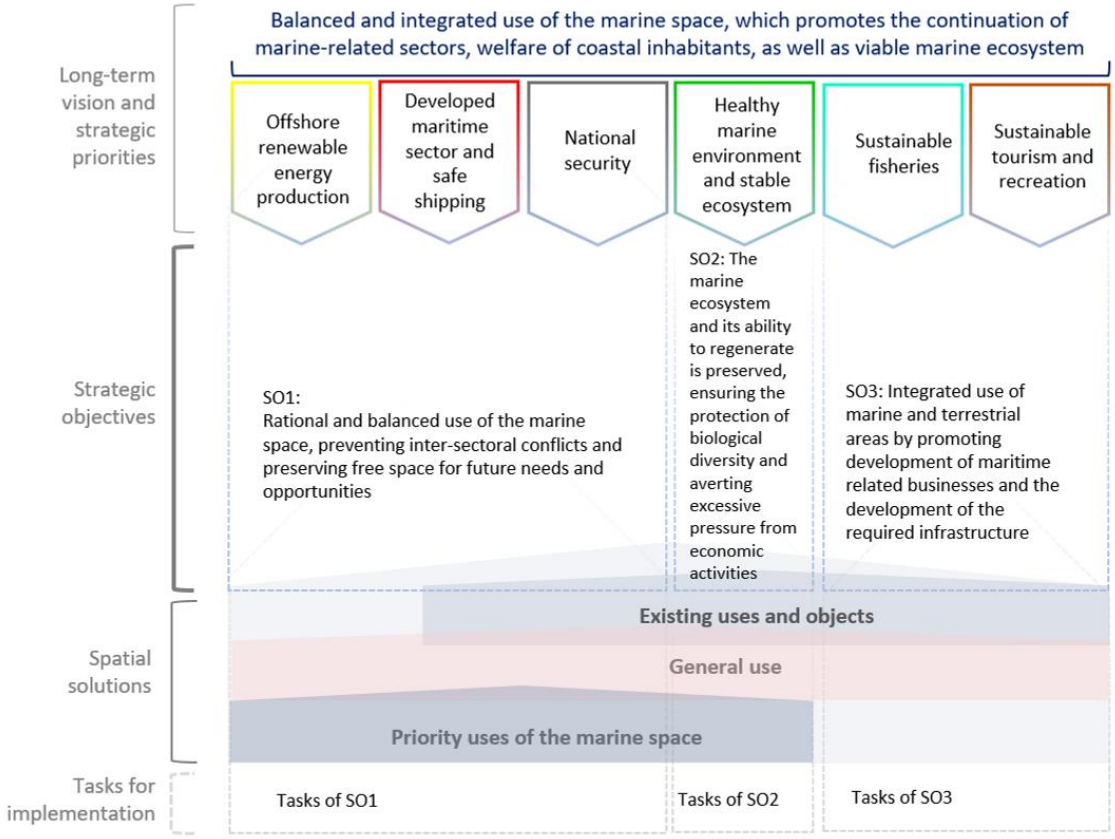

Figure 2. Interrelations of strategic priorities of long-term vision, strategic objectives and spatial solutions

4.1.6.Map

The geospatial data in graphical part of the MSP is in WGS84 (World Geodetic System 1984) coordinate system of Mercator projection (57°) using geodetic (elliptical) coordinates with the scale 1:200 000. For the thematic maps appropriate scale was chosen.

The MSP data (in WMS format) after the approval of the MSP are accessible via national Geoportal, see URL link: https://geolatvija.lv/geo/search

Allowed sea uses defined in the MSP are shown on the map (Figure 3).

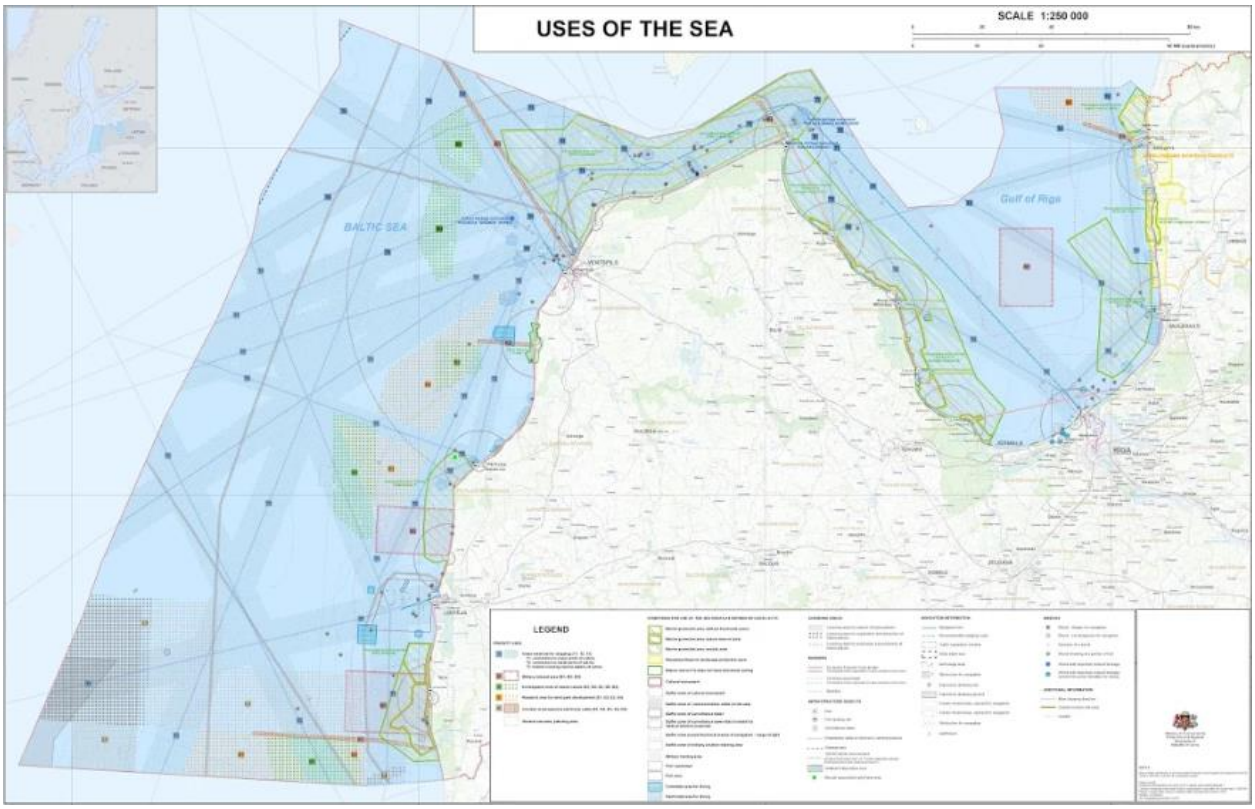

Figure 3. Allowed sea uses – MSP of Latvia.

4.1.7.Designation

The designated categories for the use of the sea in MSP of Latvia (or MSP output data) are:

1) **Priority uses of the marine space;**
2) **Existing uses of the sea;**
3) **General use areas.**

The priority uses of the marine space are defined by excluding or setting restrictions to other activities which may cause disturbances or damage the existence or development of the prioritised use. The areas of potential offshore wind energy development are also included in this category - suitable areas are identified, taking into account the natural conditions, possible impact to the marine ecosystem, as well as potential conflicts with other sea uses. The conditions for each type of use of the marine space are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of use of the marine space and conditions for use

Type of use priorities	Conditions of use
Area reserved for shipping (T1, T2, T3)	Stationary structures or constructions that are not related to the ensuring of safe navigation or not involved in the provision of shipping services are not allowed (incl. WPPs, wave power plants,

	hydrocarbon exploration and experimental extraction platforms, aquaculture fields). If the optimal position for construction identified during the exploration of wind parks overlaps the areas reserved for shipping, by agreeing on the spatial solutions for ensuring shipping safety, a displacement of the areas reserved for shipping is possible.
Area of interest for national defence (M1, M2, M3)	Stationary structures or constructions that are not related to ensuring safe navigation (incl. WPPs, wave energy stations, hydrocarbon extraction platforms, aquaculture fields) are not allowed, without the consent of the Ministry of Defence.
Investigation area of nature values (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5)	Until the exploration of respective zones, the issuance of licences for new uses of the sea that could potentially endanger protected underwater biotopes and species, (incl. WPPs, wave power plants, hydrocarbon extraction platforms, aquaculture areas) is not allowed. If the survey does not identify conservation nature values, the areas explored or parts thereof may be anticipated for issuing licences for new uses of the sea.
Research area for wind park development (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5)	New licences for the installation of a WPP and research required for it shall only be issued in these zones by the Ministry of Economics. Prior to the construction of a WPP all procedures specified in regulatory enactments shall be performed, incl. an Environmental Impact Assessment.
Potential electricity cable corridor (K1, K2, K3, K4, K5)	When planning the transnational interconnections and/or WPP connection to the onshore grid, planned directions should be investigated first.

Existing uses of the sea are those that have been defined in the regulatory enactments of Latvia prior to the development and approval of the MSP. Two defined types of areas may be identified in the regulatory enactments – those that have specific conditions of use or restrictions in respect to other uses of the marine space, and different type of features whose actual location is defined. These include:

- Marine protected areas, incl. reserves and neutral areas;
- Cultural monument, incl. buffer zone;
- Telecommunication cable lines, incl. buffer zones;
- Surveillance towers and their buffer zone;
- Military training areas and their protection zones;
- Port areas, incl. port roadstead's;
- Forbidden and restricted areas for diving;
- Licence areas and licence fields for the research, exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons;
- Explosive's dumping grounds;
- Sediment disposition areas.

In **General use area** any sea use (including fishing, shipping, tourism and recreation, research etc.) that is in line with regulations and does not harm marine environment is permitted. There are also recommendations for selected activities - the installation of wave power plants, underwater cables, marine aquaculture and of new disposal sites, as well as recommendations regarding the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons.

4.1.8.Regulations

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 740 “Procedures for the Development, Implementation and Monitoring of the Maritime Spatial Plan” (adopted: 30/10/2012; entered into force: 15/11/2012).

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 232 “About the maritime Spatial Plan for the Marine Inland Waters, Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Waters of the Republic of Latvia until 2030” (adopted: 21/05/2019; entered into force: 21/05/2019).

Please refer also to the 2nd content’s section “General information on legislation”.

4.1.9.Adoption

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Order No.232 The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 was adopted and entered into force on 21st of May.

https://likumi.lv/ta/id/306969-par-juras-planojumu-latvijas-republikas-ieksejiem-juras-udeniem-teritorialajai-jurai-un-ekskluzivas-ekonomiskas-zonas

4.1.10.SEA

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is compulsory for maritime spatial plan according to Act on Environmental Impact Assessment, under the requirements of the Directive 2011/42/EC of the European Parliament.

https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/51522-on-environmental-impact-assessment

4.1.11.Public participation

Various stakeholders were involved in the process of MSP development. On 10 January 2014, the MSP Working Group was established by order of Minister (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia). The MSP Working Group was established to ensure regular involvement and participation of government institutions, planning regions, coastal municipalities and public representatives in the marine spatial planning process, ensuring coordination of sectoral interests and exchange of information.

During the MSP development process, several discussion cycles, seminars were organised in different locations. In December 2015 and in January 2016, a public consultation on the first version of the MSP and the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was held, during which 145 comments were received. A public consultation was also held in 2018 from 27 July to 26 August.

In 2022 the MSP working group was formed by merging two pre-existing working groups - the Marine Spatial Planning Working Group and the Coastal Cooperation and Coordination Group.

4.1.12.Transboundary consultation

In parallel with the public consultation in Latvia, public consultations on the transboundary SEA were held in Lithuania, Sweden and Estonia.

4.1.13. Harmonisation with other plans

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (adopted by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on 10 June 2010) defines the role of maritime planning in ensuring the coordinated and sustainable use of coastal areas and marine aquatorium.

Maritime Spatial Plan of Latvia is a national level long-term (up to 12 years) spatial development planning document that defines the use of the sea until 2030, considering the terrestrial part that is functionally interlinked with the sea and co-ordinating interests of various sectors and local governments in use of the sea.

MSP is developed taking into consideration the international liabilities of the Republic of Latvia and in cooperation with countries, with which Latvia has common sea border. Interests of neighbouring countries are identified in the MSP area of Latvia.

4.1.14. Implementation, Monitoring, evaluation, follow-up MSP

The plan is adopted and legally binding, active since 21/05/2019. Latvian legislation (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 232) requires interim assessments of the MSP implementation and proposals for updating the plan to be prepared by 30 December 2023 and 30 December 2029.

Work has started on the first interim assessment to evaluate implementation of Latvian MSP. In 2022 the MSP working group was formed into Marine and Coastal Planning Coordination Group (Coordination group) by merging two pre-existing working groups - the Marine Spatial Planning Working Group and the Coastal Cooperation and Coordination Group. The groups were merged because the issues they addressed often overlapped and involved practically the same stakeholders. Now the Coordination group's main task is to reflect on the MSP implementation process and to involve in the preparation of the MSP interim assessment.

There have been already two Coordination group meetings according to MSP interim assessment:

- 25/11/2022 – the first meeting of the Coordination group. The agenda included information on the preparation of the interim assessment of the Marine Plan, possible updates, stakeholder involvement and MSP supported and related projects.
- 17/02/2022 – the second meeting of the Coordination group. The three main topics on the agenda concern shipping, energy and national defence interests in maritime plans.

Three more thematic Coordination group meetings on different topics are planned in the process of drafting the interim assessment during 2023.

4.1.15. Electronic resources

The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 is available in Latvian on the website of Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Government:
http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/darbibas_veidi/tap/lv/?doc=23102

The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 is available in English on the website of Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Government:
http://www.varam.gov.lv/eng/darbibas_veidi/maritime_spatial_planning/.

The MSP data (in WMS format) after the approval of the MSP are accessible via national Geoportal, see URL link:
https://geolatvija.lv/geo/search

Further information about MSP of Latvia:
https://www.varam.gov.lv/en/maritime-spatial-planning

5.What countries want to share

5.1.Pilot plans

Within **"BaltSeaPlan"** project a pilot plan for Latvian territorial sea and EEZ waters of Baltic Sea was elaborated. The plan was a good practice for stakeholder involvement in planning process, where during the project:

- 17 stakeholders' events were held in Latvia;
- 245 individuals took part at the stakeholder's events;
- ca. 450 participants took part at all events in total;
- core group of stakeholders was established (ca. 30 people).

More information on pilot plan can be found here:
http://www.baltseaplan.eu/index.php/Latvian;839/1

5.2.Good practices - Results of MSP related projects

Within **"Baltic LINes"** project a document "Stakeholder Involvement in Long-term Maritime Spatial Planning: Latvian Case" on Latvian experience in stakeholder involvement was developed and it could be useful for MSP institutions of other Baltic Sea region countries.

Within **"Baltic SCOPE**" project one of main results was "Recommendations on Maritime Spatial Planning Across Borders" that include general recommendation on cooperation

within MSP and sectoral recommendations and extensive information about the elaboration of the first draft of MSP of Latvia can be found in project output "Development of a Maritime Spatial Plan. The Latvian Recipe" (2017). The "Pan Baltic SCOPE" project is an ongoing continuation of "Baltic SCOPE" project with new activities and everyone can follow the developments within this project on http://www.panbalticscope.eu/.

Pan Baltic Scope project (2018-2019) continued to strengthen the cross-border collaboration of national authorities responsible for Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea region. The project established a Planning Forum as the central platform for the collaboration on specific planning issues identified by the planning authorities and regional organisations. The partners also worked on aspects of land-sea interactions and advancing the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach in MSP. In the frame of the project "Guidelines for Planning Marine Coastal Waters and the Adjacent Land Areas at the Local Level in Latvia" were produced. As basis for the Guidelines - a case study and a pilot thematic plan was developed out for the territory Salacgrīva municipality.

Project Land-Sea-Act (Interreg BSR project #R098 Land-Sea-Act Land-sea interactions advancing Blue Growth in Baltic Sea coastal areas) (2019-2021). It focuses on land-sea interactions aspects in MSP and Blue growth, aiming to bring together stakeholders involved in coastal management and planning, to find solutions to Maritime Spatial Planning and Blue Growth challenges around the Baltic Sea and to elaborate Multi-level Governance Agenda on Blue Growth and Spatial Planning in Baltic Sea Region.

The project provides several important outputs related to MSP and more closely focuses on the land-sea interface and its interactions. For example, the Latvian demonstration case "Balancing coastal tourism and use of offshore wind energy in Southwestern Kurzeme" aimed to develop proposals for balancing national interest in offshore wind park development with that of local communities in preserving the landscape and boosting coastal tourism and recreation. For that purpose, multiple values of land- and seascapes were assessed by applying an ecosystem services approach. Particular attention is devoted to mapping and assessing landscape qualities. The assessment results were applied in discussing alternative scenarios or pathways for achievement of ambitious goals for offshore wind energy production by 2050, which would be in balance with sustainable tourism development and preserving coastal landscape and nature assets.

Thereby, the case study has developed an ecosystem-based assessment framework for addressing land-sea interactions, which allows to integrate multiple economic, social and ecological values, including coastal landscape and ecosystem service trade-offs in complex decision-making situations such as development planning coastal areas. Furthermore, based on this and other case studies of the project, Guidelines for Coastal Area Spatial Planners were developed.

Other important outputs:

- Case study reports of several geographical and thematical case studies in BSR;

- Compendium of methodologies on how to address LSI and development trade-offs in coastal areas;
- Synthesis report about coastal governance: based on Land-Sea-Act project cases;
- Blue Growth Check Report;
- Action Plan "Entrepreneurship and Blue Growth";
- Policy brief on key messages on LSI and Blue Growth initiatives;
- Multi-level Governance Agenda on Blue Growth and Spatial Planning in BSR.

All project outputs are available at project webpage https://land-sea.eu/.

6.The current status of the MSP and new developments

Currently, work is being done on the interim assessment to evaluate implementation of Latvian MSP. Interim assessment is planned to be completed by the end of 2023. Please refer to the section No. 4.1.14. "Implementation, Monitoring, evaluation, follow-up MSP".

As support for the interim assessment and update of the MSP will serve three ongoing projects: **MSP-GREEN**, **SELINA and Baltic Sea2Land**.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) funded project **MSP-GREEN** (full title "Maritime Spatial Planning as enabler of the European Green Deal") with implementation period from November 2022 until October 2024 will provide a framework for MSP plans as "marine enablers" of the European Green Deal. The framework will address analysis and action dimensions, as to provide a cross-cutting approach to the main key topics included in the European Green Deal relevant for the marine environment and the sustainable transition of the blue economy: climate change, circular blue economy, protection of marine biodiversity, marine renewable energies, healthy and sustainable food provision. As part of it, based on the good practise guides from project partner experiences identified across the different sea basins, the possibilities of sand extraction and the possibilities of mitigating coastal erosion while minimizing the impact on marine ecosystems will be studied. With the involvement of target groups, development possibilities of aquaculture in the sea will be considered. As well, the zoning of offshore wind farms and the related offshore power cables in the Marine Plan will be considered including connections to the terrestrial network.

EU Horizon Europe funded project **SELINA** (full title "Science for Evidence-based and Sustainable Decisions About Natural Capital") with implementation period from July 2022 until June 2027 aims to reshape decision-making processes within the public and private sectors by improving the uptake of Biodiversity, Ecosystem Conditions, and Ecosystem Services information. It will support the interim assessment and update of the MSP of Latvia by uptake of latest information on marine and coastal ecosystem services.

The Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme funded project **Baltic Sea2Land** (full title "Fostering integrated governance for the joint sustainable use of human and nature capital in the near shore zone") with implementation period from January 2023 until December 2025 will provide methodological and communications support by establishing a

framework for maritime spatial planning implementation in Latvia and support taking into account land-sea interactions and the implementation of the planning document interlinked with MSP of Latvia – the National Long-Term Thematic Plan for the Development of Coastal Public Infrastructure. The project will provide an opportunity to update data needed for coastal zone development planning and assessment in Latvia and to create a GIS platform/tool for data accumulation and convenient use. The aforementioned GIS platform created during the project will aid in devising a regional level thematic plan for integrated coastal water and terrestrial coast planning in Kurzeme Planning Region, as well as a local level thematic plan for sectoral interest management via various collaboration models. The project will further improve cooperation between stakeholders in coastal zone development.

7.MSP role in protection of marine environment

Territories of MPA are included in MSP as conditions for sea use from general legislation (under designed category “Existing uses of the sea”). Currently total area of MPAs in the MPS territory of Latvia is 4363,6 km2 (15,4%).

In addition, there are “Investigation areas of nature values” (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5) which are identified under designed sea use category “Priority uses of the marine space”. Total area of Investigation areas of nature values in MSP there is 1348,5 km2 (4,8%). The conditions of these zones state that no licences are allowed for new marine uses that could potentially threaten protected underwater habitats and species until these zones have been investigated. If the studies of those zones do not identify protected natural values, licences for new uses of the sea may be granted in the areas or parts of the areas have been studied.

One of the urgent issues MSP has to deal with, is how to meet the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 target of 30% marine protected areas. Currently total area of MPAs in the MPS territory of Latvia is 15,4%. In addition, investigation area of nature values in MSP of Latvia there is 4,8%. But it is not enough to meet the 30% goal. The LIFE REEF project is therefore essential.

The project LIFE REEF ("Research of marine protected habitats in EEZ and determination of the necessary conservation status in Latvia") is led by Nature Conservation Agency. Duration of project 01/09/2020 - 31/08/2025. REEF project aims to define justified conservation status of protected habitats and contribute to comprehensive management system of marine protected areas in Latvia. Objectives of the project includes identification of potential marine protected sites and development of proposals for new MPAs for the Natura 2000 network and assessment of the effectiveness of the MPA network (including newly assessed territories) within the Latvian marine waters.

8.MSP role in Climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience

Currently in context of MPAs, MSP considers that climate change by 2030 in general could have a relatively small but negative impact as the impacts of the change will result in a reduction in the stability of the marine ecosystem, as well as potential changes in the distribution of species and habitats, which may necessitate a re-assessment of the existing and planned network of marine protected areas.

The European Green Deal is a policy MSP seeks to develop. As a supporting mechanism for considering these issues more deeply in context with MSP will serve the project MSP-GREEN ("Maritime Spatial Planning as enabler of the European Green Deal"). Please refer to section No.6 "The current status of the MSP and new developments" for more information about the project.