



Pan  
Baltic  
Scope



Co-funded by the  
European Maritime and  
Fisheries Fund of the  
European Union

# The Planning Forum

## Experiences from Pan Baltic Scope



This report is aimed mainly at professionals within maritime spatial planning and international cooperation in that field. It aims at inspiring planners to work together for coherent maritime spatial planning. It also acts as an institutional memory of the work done in the Planning Forum in the Pan Baltic Scope project.

**The Planning Forum - Experiences from Pan Baltic Scope**

Authors: Collaboration of Pan Baltic Scope  
2019

Design and layout: SIA DUE

[www.panbalticscope.eu](http://www.panbalticscope.eu)

© Pan Baltic Scope

Disclaimer: The contents and conclusions in this report, including the maps and figures, were developed by the participating project partners and related experts with the best available knowledge at the time. They do not necessarily reflect the respective national governments' positions and are therefore not binding. The European Commission or Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information this report contains.

# Content

- About the Pan Baltic Scope project** ..... 5
- What is the Planning Forum?** ..... 5
  - A need for informal dialogue and cooperation:  
the birth of the Planning Forum ..... 5
  - A regular platform for collaboration in cross-border planning ..... 6
  - A way to align project outputs with planning needs ..... 7
- What did the Planning Forum within Pan Baltic Scope do?** ..... 8
  - A forum for multi-level cooperation ..... 8
  - The iterative approach: a success factor ..... 9
  - Current issues at each Planning Forum ..... 9
  - Lateral Meetings ..... 11
  - International consultations:  
going beyond the obligations of the Espoo Convention ..... 13
  - Task forces ..... 14
  - Input to other project activities ..... 15
  - Main outcomes of the joint work in the Planning Forum ..... 17
    - Initial expectations ..... 17
    - Meeting the goals and expectations ..... 17
    - Main success factors ..... 17
    - Added value ..... 18
- How do we envision our future work?** ..... 20
  - Lasting Mechanism ..... 20
  - Some final thoughts on the Planning Forum ..... 21
- References** ..... 23



## Pan Baltic Scope – bringing better plans

Pan Baltic Scope was a collaboration between 12 planning authorities and organisations from around the Baltic Sea. We worked towards bringing better maritime spatial plans in the Baltic Sea Region.

### What is the Planning Forum?

#### **A need for informal dialogue and cooperation: the birth of the Planning Forum**

Coherent planning across borders is needed to ensure efficient and optimal use of the Baltic Sea and to meet economic, social and environmental objectives. However, coherent planning is challenging as the Baltic Sea countries and regions have different national administrative and legal settings, are in different stages in their MSP processes and the plans are developed at different strategic levels and geographical scales. Another aspect is that there are different understandings of what coherent planning is in practice.

During the project Baltic SCOPE, that preceded Pan Baltic Scope, the project members identified a need for more informal knowledge exchange and cooperation. It was proposed by the planners to establish a forum that could complement the already established official cooperation platforms such as HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and legal procedures for cross-border consultation.

The Planning Forum has acted as a practical dissemination and collaboration platform, supporting ongoing national and regional MSP processes and implementation of MSP policy. It provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions, establishing practical task forces and exchanging good practices and experiences in MSP among practitioners. It has complemented the current cooperation within HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group with practical, task-oriented and informal working methods, thereby contributing to an efficient, more complete and strengthened MSP network.

## A regular platform for collaboration in cross-border planning

The Planning Forum was the main working meeting for planners within the Pan Baltic Scope project. It had a central role, being a regular platform for the collaboration on specific planning issues identified by the planning authorities and regional organizations early in the process. A Planning Forum like this is complementary to international conventions and legal mechanisms, and the informal setting inspired openness. It served as a kind of think-tank, crucial for knowledge exchange and down-to-earth discussions that gave added value to MSP processes. It also fostered a joint understanding of concepts and challenges, as well as functioning as an early warning system on emerging planning issues out of interest for neighbouring countries.

*“The Planning Forum has allowed us to get a cross-border perspective for national MSP process, especially on cross-border multiuse solutions.”*

Stefan Husa, Maritime Spatial Planner, Åland

## A way to align project outputs with planning needs

The Planning Forum was also the place where experts, for example activity leaders, presented their achievements in the project and planners provided feedback from a planning perspective. Outputs from the activities, such as tools, handbooks and methods, were “tested” with the Planning Forum, to ensure both usability and relevance to planning. This working mode contributed to providing hands-on practitioners’ input to the work carried out in the activities and to ensuring that the output of these activities is in line with actual needs in the maritime spatial planning processes.



# What did the Planning Forum within Pan Baltic Scope do?

## A forum for multi-level cooperation

The Planning Forum consisted of members representing all the partners of the project. Partner countries and regions were represented by the people responsible for the actual MSP planning in their respective country or region, and thus, the ones in most need of cross-border dialogue and cooperation.

The Planning Forum activity consisted of different types of groups: forum meetings including all the members; lateral meetings between two or more countries to discuss joint issues that arose during forum meetings; and task force where questions and discussion material on specific planning issues were prepared for the forum meetings. Additionally, some countries decided to invite other partners to an international consultation meeting on their plan proposal.

During this project, seven Planning Forum meetings were conducted. The meetings were typically one day long and back-to-back with other project meetings. Standard agenda and main points of interest usually consisted of:

- each country sharing their current most pressing issues;
- brief progress information on other project activities;
- focused discussions on certain predefined planning issues;
- information from lateral meetings;
- a deep-dive into selected project activities, followed by input to their project outputs.

## The iterative approach: a success factor

To match the relevant and current needs of ongoing national processes, the Planning Forum used an iterative and agile approach. Meetings for decisions on topics and areas to focus on depending on the current needs of the members were organized periodically. The Planning Forum managed to maintain flexibility, adjusting work in the forum to the actual needs of the members, instead of blindly following the work plan. This was much appreciated by the members of the Planning Forum.

## Current issues at each Planning Forum

One important agenda point on the Planning Forum meetings was giving each member an opportunity to raise the status of their respective national processes and current most pressing issues. If needed, these issues could then be further discussed later in the program. This too was an important aspect of maintaining flexibility in the focus of the Planning Forum and adjusting the discussions to current needs of the members, as well as facilitating cross-border knowledge exchange and cooperation. Below is a list of issues discussed in the informal setting of the Planning Forum, which supported the goal of achieving improved coherence between national plans in the Baltic Sea region.

- **Dealing with uncertainties surrounding Offshore Wind Farms in MSP**  
Environmental aspects and how to monitor them as well as what environmental data and in what detail is considered in MSPs were discussed. Examples of topics included the impact on wildlife and social aspects regarding acceptance of Offshore Wind Farms.
- **Make a digital plan legally binding**  
Legal texts must be fixed and retractable, while digital maps can be more user friendly. Challenges, opportunities and partners' status or thoughts were discussed.
- **Governmental forums**  
Discussions on whether a country has set up a group in the ministry or other, in its planning process, that brings together different authorities regarding MSP issues.
- **Dealing with comments on plans**  
Consideration of consultation outcomes and how to communicate and act upon them.
- Discussing **results and outcomes from other ongoing projects** within the area, for example, the Interreg project Baltic LINES
- **Considering Marine Protected Area (MPA) management measures in MSP – the bottom trawling ban example**  
Discussion on the regulations in place – for example, the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Natura 2000 – as well as approaches to MPA management measures concerning the ban on bottom trawling, and how to handle them in MSP.

- **Lack of guidance to municipalities**  
Discussion about who has the mandate to plan on various administrative levels in the Baltic Sea Region, specifically the role of municipalities, and how they interact with the national/regional level.
- **Has Offshore Wind Farms been the most raised issue by the public during consultations?**  
Exchange of experiences from consultation and stakeholder meetings in different countries.
- **Marine protected areas with regards to MSP**  
Discussion on the mandate to assign MPAs, how to show them in your MSP and how to deal with stakeholders who fear MSP will create more MPAs.



## Lateral Meetings

The lateral meetings were set up between two countries or regions when a need to discuss mutual interests, potential synergies or conflicts of interests were identified. Standardized documentation of the meetings helped the partners grasp the work done during meetings and to share the main outcomes with the rest of the Planning Forum. The lateral meetings contributed to giving the planners an opportunity to gain and share knowledge in the planning processes.

### Example 1: Lateral meeting between Germany and Estonia

In August 2018, Estonian national court abolished Hiiu MSP regarding Offshore Wind Farms. One of the objections that the court stated, was the lack of environmental information to designate areas for Offshore Wind Farms. There was a need to gather knowledge on different approaches to planning Offshore Wind Farms in MSPs and to figure out what environmental information is necessary to make strategic decisions. Germany already had data that could be of use to Estonia. Therefore, a lateral meeting was set up between the countries.

*“Germany has a lot more experience planning Offshore Wind Farms, and in the meeting we got more common understanding and experience exchange that proved very useful in our national process to justify our draft planning solution.”*

Triin Lepland, Adviser Spatial Planning Department, Ministry of Finance, Estonia

## Example 2: Lateral meeting between Poland and Denmark

Discussions on the issues of MSP in the so called “grey zone” area, were undertaken in the former project Baltic SCOPE, when planners from Poland and Denmark met for the first time in October 2016. The meeting was supported by the competent MSP authorities and ministries of foreign affairs of both countries. During that meeting, both countries recognized the usefulness of cooperating to ensure coherence of their respective maritime plans. It was agreed that this temporary solution should be used by planners until the border issue, which is a political issue beyond the mandate of the planning authorities, is resolved. Hence, a lateral meeting was organized between the two countries, back-to-back with a Planning Forum meeting, in September 2018. The meeting resulted in a better understanding of each other’s work processes, and both sides agreed to keep each other posted and informed further regarding plans in the area of “the grey zone”.

*“Our meetings were informative and educational in nature, in other words it was aimed at familiarizing with the methodology of work in MSP in both countries and did not affect the course of work related to establishing the sea border between the countries, finalized at the end of 2018. This matter proceeded at a completely different decision-making level (ministries of foreign affairs) and factors related to maritime spatial planning were not very significant for the progress of works. However, the effect on maritime planning is significant - we now know precisely where the boundaries of individual maritime spatial plans are.”*

Marta Konik, Specialist at the Maritime Office in Szczecin,  
Poland



## International consultations: going beyond the obligations of the Espoo Convention<sup>1</sup>

As a way to support and strengthen cross-border consultation regarding issues that affect neighbouring countries, some member states of the project conducted an international consultation meeting for their MSP proposals. Its purpose was to support the written consultation process by informing on and explaining proposals, answering certain questions directly, and thus, facilitating the written consultation opinions sent before the end of the consultation period.

The meetings were primarily aimed at authorities responsible for MSP and transboundary environmental effects. The focus of the meetings was to deal with cross-border issues in general and address transboundary environmental effects of the consultation proposals. The voluntary consultations were positive as they provided initial informal input. They would also help to predict how other countries may react in the formal procedure.

*“The Swedish International Consultation meeting gave very good discussions and input for the Swedish national planning. One contributing factor was that other countries’ planners were more familiar with Sweden’s MSP even before the meeting and could therefore provide better input, not only due to an early dialogue, but also thanks to the Planning Forum.”*

Joacim Johannesson, Senior Analyst,  
Swedish Agency for Marine and Water  
Management, Sweden

*“Estonia also arranged an international consultation to give countries an overview of their draft plan. In the consultation meeting, important questions were raised on different topics and discussions gave a great input to our plan.”*

Triin Lepland, Adviser in Spatial Planning  
Department,  
Ministry of Finance, Estonia

1. The Espoo (EIA) Convention sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning. It also lays down the general obligation of States to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.

## Task forces

For planning issues that were not dealt with specifically in a Pan Baltic Scope activity, but where planners saw the need for a deeper cross-border discussion, task forces were formed to lead discussions on the identified issues. Members of the Planning Forum volunteered for the task forces and prepared questions and background material on the issue in focus so that it could be discussed in the Planning Forum. Since these issues were not part of an activity or work package within the project, no specific deliverables or outputs were produced other than being documented in meeting minutes. It is up to the participating countries and regions to incorporate the issues in future work as they see fit. Examples of task force issues discussed in the Planning Forum are presented below.

### #2 Cross-border fisheries

Discussions were conducted on getting to know, understanding, showing and considering interests of other countries’ fishermen (fishing in other countries’ EEZ and potential future developments like Offshore Wind Farms). Focusing on, for example, how planners are dealing with fisheries in national MSP in relation to other activities and how to prioritise.

### #4 Fishery-wind energy

The focus was not on where to allocate Offshore Wind Farms because that is being done in other projects. Instead, the focus was rather on discussing what the main problems and challenges connected to fishing activities within the Offshore Wind Farms are. As basis for the discussions, a survey was conducted among Planning Forum members to examine the situation in the Baltic Sea countries and regions. Solutions from other sea regions were also discussed.



## Input to other project activities

One function of the Planning Forum was to guide, inform and provide input to other activities in the project, especially to the further development of tools and methods. The activities were led by people who are experts in their respective scientific field but do not necessarily have a planning background. As the focus of the Planning Forum was always that of a planner's perspective, this activity was one way of making sure that outputs from the activities would be useful and relevant for actual MSP and meet the planning needs in the partner countries and regions.

Some of the activities that presented their work and got feedback from the Planning Forum in Pan Baltic Scope were Cumulative Impacts, Land-Sea Interaction, Lessons Learned, Green Infrastructure and Follow-up of common regional framework. Read about the activities and their final products at [www.panbalticscope.eu](http://www.panbalticscope.eu).



## Planning forum's feedback to Cumulative Impacts

During one meeting within the Planning Forum, a session on the activity Cumulative Impacts was conducted, where ongoing and planned work was presented with an opportunity to receive feedback.

*“The Planning forum was involved in developing a definition of cumulative impacts that can apply in the Baltic Sea MSP context. We also discussed priorities for issues to study with respect to cumulative impacts at sea, which were then used when we defined our case studies in the activity on cumulative impacts. In addition, interactions on the general level with the planning forum provided a chance for us who are not normally involved in planning but are involved in Pan Baltic Scope as experts in other fields, to better understand the key challenges and work steps in MSP.”*

Lena Bergström, Project coordinator, HELCOM

# Main outcomes of the joint work in the Planning Forum

## Initial expectations

At the beginning and set up of Pan Baltic Scope, goals on what was going to be achieved in the Planning Forum were defined by the members:

- Deal with hands-on planning issues between partners
- Ensure cross-border perspective and relevance to national processes
- Exchange experience, between partners and other projects
- Provide feedback and support to other work packages and activities
- Synchronize and see connections between activities

## Meeting the goals and expectations

When asked to reflect upon the initial expectations, all partners stated that the Planning Forum had contributed positively to the progress of their MSP related work, and the predominant experience had been positive in terms of meeting the goals that were initially set. The expectations on getting an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience across borders was met. This kind of informal exchange increased mutual understanding of national decisions towards achieving greater coherence. Some members found that more emphasis could have been put on providing feedback on project activities and synchronization among them.

## Main success factors

There is a consensus in the Planning Forum on the importance of this kind of forum not only for hands-on knowledge exchange between planners today, but also as a kind of institutional memory for future planners in the Baltic Sea Region. There are other mechanisms for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, for example, the joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, international conventions and legal mechanisms. It is important to emphasize that the Planning Forum is complementary to those, being practical and hands-on.

It is also important to stress that the Planning Forum did not start from scratch, but is a cooperation that has evolved over the years through different projects. Maybe it has worked so well because the members feel joint ownership and responsibility for the Baltic Sea. They say that *a chain*

*is never stronger than its weakest link*, and the Pan Baltic Scope project has benefited from already established strong links between the partners and individuals in the Planning Forum. This is probably the most important success factor of all.

## Added value

The Planning Forum has managed to live up to the expectations of the project. Additionally, the members express a long list of added advantages which are not easily measured, but deserve to be highlighted.

- The forum made it possible to take planning beyond our borders into consideration in our MSP process.
- Every meeting generates a wealth of ideas, which is very inspiring.
- We handle concrete issues which we face, sharing and learning how to solve things.
- The forum supports cooperation and coherence between plans.
- Our conversations serve as an early-warning system.
- It helped us to anticipate our neighbouring countries' comments, and we knew not only what to expect, but also, perhaps even more importantly, how to adapt.
- It is a practical and hands-on exchange with colleagues.
- The informal discussions on current issues are very valuable and should be highlighted, there is no other forum like that for MSP.
- Sharing data is not such an obstacle anymore, as we have a better understanding of each other's plans and legal systems.

*"The Planning Forum has provided hands-on experiences from the neighboring countries on a broad array of issues."*

Joacim Johannesson, Senior Analyst, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Sweden

*"The Planning Forum provided a good platform to share information between participants, and that could then be spread in home organizations."*

Anne Nummela, Regional Planning Advisor, The Regional Council of Satakunta, Finland

*"In our series of the Planning Forums in Pan Baltic Scope, we have handled concrete issues which we all face."*

Philipp Arndt, Maritime Spatial Planner, Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, Germany

*"The Planning Forum has helped in following the Baltic Sea MSP developments. It is useful also for our work in a research institute."*

Riku Varjopuro, Senior Researcher, Finnish Environment Institute

*"It was exciting to follow the process of joint learning, both individual and organisational, and information exchange within the Planning Forum. It was nice that I was part of this formidable learning environment. On another note, the project time was very short and I felt that in some cases, activities would have wished to get more feedback on draft reports, etc."*

Michael Kull, Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio

## How do we envision our future work?

### Lasting Mechanism

One of the tasks of both the Pan Baltic Scope project and the Planning Forum was to formulate a proposal for a lasting mechanism that would help to manage the outcome of the forum after the project has ended. The Planning Forum identified the different needs of a lasting mechanism, as well as the possible solutions regarding both content and practical issues, taking into consideration preferences of all the partners. The final decisions for such a mechanism must then be taken in each country or region and participating organization.

### Suggestion for a lasting mechanism

#### A Pan Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Forum

The full name of the planning forum should be The Pan Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Forum.

The purpose of a Planning Forum is to facilitate knowledge exchange, discuss current issues, strengthen coherence and thus support the MSP cycle. The forum should also look into the future and aim to improve joint planning evidence and coherence for the next round of plans.

It is very important that the forum is practical and hands-on in format, as a complement to the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

Permanent members of the group should be the ones who are operationally responsible for elaborating the maritime spatial plan.

The Planning Forum should gather for at least one operational meeting per year, adding more meetings when necessary.

It should be suggested to the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group to have the Planning Forum as a subgroup to them. One or more chairpersons should be appointed for a couple of years.

Basic funding for participation in meetings should be provided through national funding. Additional funding could be attracted from projects.

## Some final thoughts on the Planning Forum

We believe that the Planning Forum has contributed to better Maritime Spatial Plans for the participating countries and regions, and it also has been of guidance to research community in creating tools better adapted to the planners' needs. We understand that the Planning Forum only plays a small part in the MSP work, but we believe the contribution is crucial in getting the plans more accurate right from the start. Instead of presenting planning solutions for the first time in the international consultation process, which then must be redone or retracted when faced with neighbouring countries' reality, we are aware of each other's plans, issues and priorities beforehand. We even help each other by sharing data and planning evidence, and by exchanging experiences on how to involve stakeholders and avoid conflicts. Getting it right from the start saves time and money.

## References

Pan Baltic Scope (2019) homepage. <http://www.panbalticscope.eu>

Espoo Convention. <https://www.unece.org/env/eia/eia.html>

HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group (2019) homepage. <https://vasab.org/theme-posts/maritimespatial-planning/helcom-vasab-msp-wg/>

This report is about experiences from the Planning Forum and serves as an institutional memory of the work done in the Pan Baltic Scope collaboration. The Planning Forum was a practical, hands-on means to deal with planning issues in the Baltic Sea Region, ensuring cross-border perspective and increased coherence. The Planning Forum supported informal collaboration and knowledge exchange between partner countries and regions, which was very much appreciated. With this report, the Planning Forum of Pan Baltic Scope hopes to inspire current and future planners to work together for coherent cross-border maritime spatial planning.



**Pan Baltic Scope** was a collaboration between 12 planning authorities and organisations from around the Baltic Sea. We worked towards bringing better maritime spatial plans in the Baltic Sea Region.

**Get our results:**  
[www.panbalticscope.eu](http://www.panbalticscope.eu)