

## Notes from 6<sup>th</sup> MSP Planners` Forum

25.03.2025.

Online

Planners` Forum (supported by Interreg BSR [PASPS project](#)) is a platform for practical exchange for MSP practitioners, topics to discuss remain flexible and adaptive; participants of Planners` Forum can raise pressing MSP issues to be included in the agenda upon the need. The 6<sup>th</sup> meeting concentrates on maritime defence in maritime spatial planning (MSP).

### News from VASAB and HELCOM

#### VASAB:

Three PA Spatial Planning relevant Interreg BSR Project Platforms [have been selected for funding](#):

- Strategic Ecosystem-Based Planning for the Sustainable Future of the Baltic Sea (SEABAS Project Platform)  
Project aim: To establish a Baltic Sea regional framework for integrating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) into Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), synthesizing prior outcomes to enhance the sustainable management of human activities at sea while promoting blue economy and biodiversity conservation.
- Baltic Climate-Resilient Coastal Planning Network (Baltic PlaNet)  
The Baltic PlaNet project platform is a comprehensive initiative dedicated to enhancing the resilience of coastal communities in the Baltic Sea Region. By empowering municipalities to integrate climate change considerations into their spatial planning, the platform aims to safeguard both natural and urban environments.
- BSR Urban Mobility  
The overall outcome of the platform project is to build cities' capacity on approaches to tackle urban mobility challenges – highlighting SUMPs as the cornerstone of local mobility policies.

There is a new project with VASAB partnership – [Land-Based Planners' Forum](#) which aims to tackle critical challenges in spatial planning across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), shaped by recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical tensions. On March 6 the project has [launched a survey](#) that addresses land-based spatial planners working in local, regional, or national public authorities in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, and Sweden. Its aim is to gather the networking and collaboration needs of spatial planners across the Baltic Sea Region to help shape the future Land-Based Planners' Forum platform. Participants are invited to fill the survey and share it amongst their colleagues. Find the survey [here](#).

Thanks to Land-based Planners' Forum project, MSP Planners' Forum has gained a logo which is presented to the group. It will be shared with the participants, so that it can be used when presenting MSP Planners' Forum platform.

Regarding past and upcoming events, participants are informed about:

- [VASAB webinar on National Level Spatial Planning](#) to exchange insights and share experiences related to national-level spatial policies around the Baltic Sea Region that took place on 11 February 2025 online.
- [NESB project kick-off event](#) that happened on February 24-25 in Hague, The Netherlands.
- 94th [VASAB CSPD/BSR](#) meeting, March 19-20 in Tallinn, Estonia.
- EUSBSR Live Meeting in Turku, Finland on 1-2 April 2025
- [Interreg BSR Programme Conference](#) in Tampere, Finland on 20-22 May 2025

- [European Maritime Day 2025](#) in Cork, Ireland on 21-23 May 2025
- [5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum](#) will take place on 11-12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia. Next MSP Planners' Forum meeting will be held back-to-back with this event. Registration will be open in May.

## HELCOM:

Last HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting was held in September 19-20 in Riga, Latvia; the upcoming meeting will be held on 7-9 April in Rostock, Germany.

HELCOM has been working on the interim assessment of the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation, which preliminary results will be on the agenda of the upcoming HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting as well. There are two HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines revision processes going on: application of ecosystem-based approach (EBA) in MSP and the guidelines on MSP output data. Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region are under revision as well.

Policy Area Spatial Planning supporting project PASPS has been successfully prolonged for two more years. The project is supporting the MSP Planners' Forum, therefore, these are significant news for the participants.

## News from countries

### Denmark

Denmark's revised MSP is now in its operational phase, entering a process of guiding and communication with the authorities, businesses and all the stakeholders. Regarding pressing issues, Denmark is now launching a project on ecosystem-based analysis with an aim to develop a tool to further support and improve spatial planning in the future. Work on a legislative amendment has been going on where a dispensation scheme is being introduced in the law to allow test projects that are focused on new technology and green energy transition. There is no concrete relation between Danish MSP and maritime defence, other than the areas that are designated for defence.

### Estonia

Estonian MSP was adopted three years ago, now there is ongoing work on its implementation and monitoring. Interviews with different stakeholders from different sectors are being held about whether MSP is up to date and what the new or pressing issues are. These conversations have highlighted challenges with fisheries and cables, defence, and the need to simplify the permitting processes and gaps between different institutions in Estonia. A pressing issue has been the lack of political consistency in Estonian government, and the safety of underwater infrastructure.

### Finland

Finland is currently revising their MSP, the revision process is expected to end in 2027. The focus now is on maritime security, security of supply, marine green transitions, climate-smart MSP, multi-use. There are two national surveys launched – one on regional economic impacts of maritime sectors, the other on security and security of supply. The results of the latter will serve as a base for building future scenarios and a security vision for marine areas.

### Åland

The revision process for MSP is planned this spring. However, political indications have been received with a need to allocate the resources to revising the Water Act instead. In other words, the revision of the MSP will likely be postponed. The Government of Åland's project Sunnavind is currently investigating the possibility of auctioning areas north of Åland for offshore wind power development. The planning process for this area is ongoing, and the Strategic Impact Assessment is being prepared. Eventually, an Espoo consultation will take place. Regarding

defence-related matters, this falls entirely under mainland Finland's jurisdiction. Åland does not work on this aspect within the MSP. However, there are consultations with mainland Finland during the planning process to ensure that Åland's plans do not conflict with national defence considerations.

### **Germany**

MSP has been implemented and work on or finalizing our monitoring and evaluation concept and starting the application has begun. It is planned to have a publication done in July. NSEC Support Group's main topics currently are habitat loss and mitigation measures which will be covered in NESB project. Regarding sectoral plan update, the most pressing issue is political changes in German government that causes discussions on possible reduction or adjustment of the offshore energy targets.

### **Latvia**

In October 2024 the interim assessment of MSP has been accepted, so national MSP is in force since then, and the amendment procedure is expected to be done by October 2025. To properly have amendments before that, there will be a process of figuring out what changes are needed in the legal procedure and the regulations, such as implementation of multi-use or improvement of permissions and licensing. Latvian Ministry of Economics is now working with the regulation about innovation and its support, and that could also be added and discussed in relation to MSP. Regarding maritime defence, there is a plan on working together with Latvian Ministry of Defence which is the responsible authority on these issues in Latvia.

### **Lithuania**

There are two dedicated territories for renewable energy added to Lithuanian MSP. It is planned to develop a long-term strategy for leisure boating, harbours and ports for both the sea and internal waters. There is also a request for creating an intersectoral working group on marine issues, since the field doesn't have one yet in Lithuania.

### **Poland**

In 2024, Poland has prepared a report on the development status of Polish maritime areas and this report is the formal requirement from Polish legislation on MSP, and it is the basis for giving the decision on the change of the plan. Reports include proposed changes to research, new developments of offshore wind farms, state defence and security, protection of marine mammals and inclusion of new European laws updating the boundaries of nature conservation areas and updating the database and of underwater monuments. The most pressing issue is the revision of Polish MSP. Regarding the main topic, MSP address national security by designating specific zones for defence and security purposes, including restricted or closed areas for military use and ensuring coexistence between civilian maritime activities such as shipping, fishing and offshore energy.

### **Sweden**

Swedish MSP is in the revision process, there has been a 2.5 year planning process that has resulted in submission of the plan to the government on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The plan was focused on offshore wind, there are various areas for offshore wind added, but not in the Baltic Sea due to the political situation and defence interests. Maritime defence is highly relevant to Sweden. A government decision in November 2024 rejected all applications that were submitted for offshore wind due to defence interests. A report has been published in December 2024 regarding proposals for new legislation, it is available in both Swedish and English.

## Presentations: Maritime defence in maritime spatial planning

### Example of dealing with defence issues in the Site Development Plan (North Sea), *Annika Koch (BSH)*

Participants were introduced to Germany's developed Site Development Plan 2025 and the environmental assessment, which was published this January and is currently available in German, but the translation is in process. The main task of the site development plan is the designation of areas and sites for offshore wind and the designation of cable routes for connecting the wind farms to land and for interconnectors. Reacting to current geopolitical threats, the developers have been working with German Naval command to design rerouting and new requirements. The process, examination procedure, and potential effects of rerouting are explained.

### National and regional approaches in managing hybrid threat in current situation on the Baltic Sea, *Jaak Viilipus (Ministry of Climate of Estonia)*

The presentation begun with an overview of shipping in the Baltic Sea – statistics, terminology, and trends, all changing together with the geopolitical situation. The traffic lines in the Gulf of Finland are shown, explaining the vessel gatherings – groups of vessels that are not able to enter the Russian port due to permissions that they have to wait for, so they gather next to the traffic lines. The GPS signals are often disrupted over the Gulf of Finland. These situations form various risks, including hybrid threats. The Baltic Sea already has some good collaboration practices, such as information sharing, and they are crucial in pressing times like now in order to react accordingly to possible incidents. Hybrid threat is the new norm for the Baltic Sea, and international collaboration is key for tackling these threats.

#### *Comments from the discussion*

The links between MSP and reducing hybrid threats are discussed, and Jaak Viilipus comments that he sees MSP as a tool for very well thought through shipping lanes, traffic separation scheme and accurate anchorage area.

A comment is expressed about Estonia's and Finland's good collaboration practices regarding MSP in the Gulf of Finland.

Another remark is aimed at emphasizing the importance of flexibility and adaptiveness in this everchanging situation in the Baltic Sea. We have experienced climate-proofing of MSP, and it is suggested that it may be time for defence-proofing of MSP.

## Discussions

The discussion part was led by Roosa Mikkola and Laura Pietilä from the project Baltic Sea2Land. They are organizing a panel discussion at 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum on Safety and Security of Supply at the Baltic Sea and introduced the participants to an overview of the proposed session format and its preliminary idea. Participants were invited to share their opinions on the most topical subjects for the discussion and elaborated on their choices, therefore identifying the most pressing topics of maritime security and safety of supply for MSP practitioners.

## Themes and timing for the next Planners` Forum

It was already agreed the previous time that the next meeting of the MSP Planners` Forum will be held in-person, back-to-back with 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum in Riga, Latvia, 11-12 November 2025. Its main topic will be coastal planning.

## Participants of the 6<sup>th</sup> MSP Planners Forum within PASPS project:

Country	Name	Organisation
Denmark	Malte Hvidsten	Danish Maritime Authority
Estonia	Lembe Reiman	Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
Finland	Mari Pohja-Mykrä	Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Finland	Essi Kärpijoki	Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Germany	Annika Koch	Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, BSH
Germany	Philipp Arndt	Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, BSH
Germany	Ulrich Scheffler	Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, BSH
Latvia	Marta Štūbe	Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development
Latvia	Anete Bērziņa	Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development
Lithuania	Paulius Kliučininkas	Ministry of Environment
Poland	Natalia Zajac	Ministry of Infrastructure
Poland	Katarzyna Falinska	Ministry of Infrastructure
Sweden	Elin Celik	Swedish Marine & Water Management Authority
Sweden	Jan Schmidtbauer Crona	Swedish Marine & Water Management Authority
Sweden	Joacim Johannesson	Swedish Marine & Water Management Authority
Sweden	Jonas Bjärnstedt	Swedish Marine & Water Management Authority
Sweden	Marie Hallberg	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
<b>Supporting organisations</b>		
VASAB	Jana Patmalniece	VASAB Secretariat
VASAB	Tīna Šipkēvica	VASAB Secretariat
VASAB	Margarita Vološina	VASAB Secretariat
VASAB	Egija Stapkēviča	VASAB Secretariat
VASAB	Liene Strazdiņa	VASAB Secretariat
VASAB	Tiit Oidjäv	VASAB Chairperson
HELCOM	Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky	HELCOM Secretariat



EUSBSR  
EU STRATEGY  
FOR THE BALTIC  
SEA REGION  
Policy Area Spatial Planning

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Baltic Sea2Land	Roosa Mikkola	Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Baltic Sea2Land	Laura Pietilä	Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Estonia	Jaak Viilipus	Ministry of Climate