5th BALTIC MSP FORUM

11-12 November 2025 Riga, Latvia

5th Baltic MSP Forum Report

Navigate Planning Through Changes!

Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Co-funded by the European Union

BLUE ECONOMY Baltic Sea2Land

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www.vasab.org

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https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/balticsea2land/

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Introduction

The 5th Baltic MSP Forum "*Navigate Planning Through Changes*!" took place on 11–12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia. This Forum was organized in close connection with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme's financed Baltic Sea2Land project, serving as its final conference, and broadening the scope to strengthen linkages between maritime spatial planning (MSP) and coastal zone planning.

Under the slogan *Navigate Planning Through Changes*, the Forum's agenda featured a wide array of timely and pressing topics, including enhancing resilience and liveability of coastal communities, integrating ecosystem services into MSP, improving coastal accessibility, addressing climate change challenges in coastal municipalities, promoting blue-green infrastructure, and advancing multi-use and implementation of sustainable blue economy. Special focus was also given to sea-basin/macro-regional and multi-level governance, ecosystem-based approach, effective use of space, security and safety in the Baltic Sea Region, and the Sea2Land Navigator – innovative planning tool developed within the Baltic Sea2Land project.

The Forum gathered 169 participants from the maritime spatial planning and coastal planning and development community from the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. It provided a platform for experts, policy makers, academia and research institutions, NGO's and practitioners from national, sub-national, and local authorities to share experiences, exchange ideas, and develop new approaches for sustainable management of marine and coastal areas and strengthening the multi-level governance.

This report summarises all sessions held throughout the event. It provides overviews of plenaries and parallel sessions, offers access to video recordings of the sessions, ensuring that the knowledge shared during the Forum remains available to a wider audience beyond those who attended event in person.

The 5th Baltic MSP Forum was organised by the VASAB Secretariat together with the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, as the Lead Partner of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region project Baltic Sea2Land, and in cooperation with the partners of the project's consortium. The 5th Baltic MSP Forum was supported by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 – through the Subsidy contract for the project #C018 Baltic Sea2Land.

All information about the 5th Baltic MSP Forum is available on the website www.BalticMSPForum.eu.

Agenda of the 5th Baltic MSP Forum

11 November 2025, Riga, Latvia

Event moderators: Natalia Zając and Artis Ozoliņš

9:00	*Registration and Welcome coffee*
10:00	***OPENING*** *Welcoming remarks* • **Raimonds Čudars** *Minister of the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of Republic of Latvia* • **Emilia Malak-Pętlicka** *Deputy director of Strategy Department, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy of Poland, Chair of the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the BSR* • **Kai Trümpler** *Director of Spatial Planning at the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany, Co-chair of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group* *Setting the scene - Planners in Changing World.* *Keynote speakers:* • **Diāna Rasuma** *Director of Spatial Planning and Land Management Department, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, Lead partner of Baltic Sea2Land project* • **MSP past, present and future: Charting a course in a changing world by Kira Gee** *Senior Scientist, Helmholtz Zentrum Hereon and Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH), Germany* *Panel discussion: Current Challenges in Maritime & Coastal Spatial Planning* • **Felix Leinemann,** *Head of Unit for Blue Economy Sectors, Aquaculture and MSP, DG MARE, European Commission* • **Kai Trümpler,** *Director of Spatial Planning at the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany, Co-chair of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group* • **Mari Pohja-Mykrä,** *VASAB CSPD/BSR representative of Finland* • **Kamil Rybka,** *Chair of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group* • **Helen Erik,** *Project Manager at Saaremaa Municipality, Estonia*
11:30	*Exhibition, coffee break*
12:00	*Interactive session "Country presentations on MSP and coastal planning" with real-time illustrations made by Gatis Šļūka*
13:00	*Lunch, Exhibition*
14:00	***Parallel sessions #1*** 1. Resilient and Liveable Coastal Communities 2. Integrating Ecosystem Services into MSP 3. Sea2Land Navigator: Your Compass to Unlock Planning Insights

15:15		*Exhibition, Coffee break*
15:45		***Parallel sessions #2*** 4. Tackling Consequences of Climate Change in Coastal Municipalities 5. Integrating Blue-Green Infrastructure in Maritime Spatial Planning 6. Coastal Accessibility: a Multi-Level Perspective on Challenges and Solutions in the Baltic Sea Region
17:00		*Exhibition, Video screening of previous MSP Forums, VEF Museum tour*
18:00 21:00	-	*Evening reception at the same venue*

12 November 2025

8:30	*Welcome coffee*
9:00	***OPENING OF DAY 2*** *Recap of Day 1* *Keynote: The beginners guide to ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning – the why, what and how from the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group's EBA-taskforce* • **Jan Schmidtbauer Crona,** Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management *Panel discussion: What Do We Mean as EBA Planning&Management?* • **Jan Schmidtbauer Crona,** *Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management* • **Ben Sass,** *Head of Project Development National Offshore and Legal Counsel Offshore Wind /PNE Group* • **Marcin Kotlarek ,** *Race for the Baltic* • **Nick Boxem,** *Government of the Netherlands, Manager, Marine Policy Directorate, Steering group member, Greater North Sea Basin Initiative*
10:30	*Coffee break*
10:45	***Parallel sessions #3*** 7. Advancing Transboundary Governance: Baltic and North Sea Challenges and Prospects 8. Safety and Security of Supply at the Baltic Sea 9.Effective Use of Space for a Sustainable Blue Economy: Baltic Approaches to Multi-Use in Marine and Coastal Areas
12:10	*Closing session*
13:00	*Light lunch*
	Back-to back events *7th MSP Planners' Forum (invitation only)* *Workshop to enhance uptake of ecosystem services information in management and policy organised by the BESTmarine project.*

5th Baltic MSP Forum in Numbers and Facts

A total of **169 participants from 14 different countries** took part in the 5th Baltic MSP Forum, representing a diverse and truly international community of maritime spatial planning and coastal planning professionals. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of participants by country.

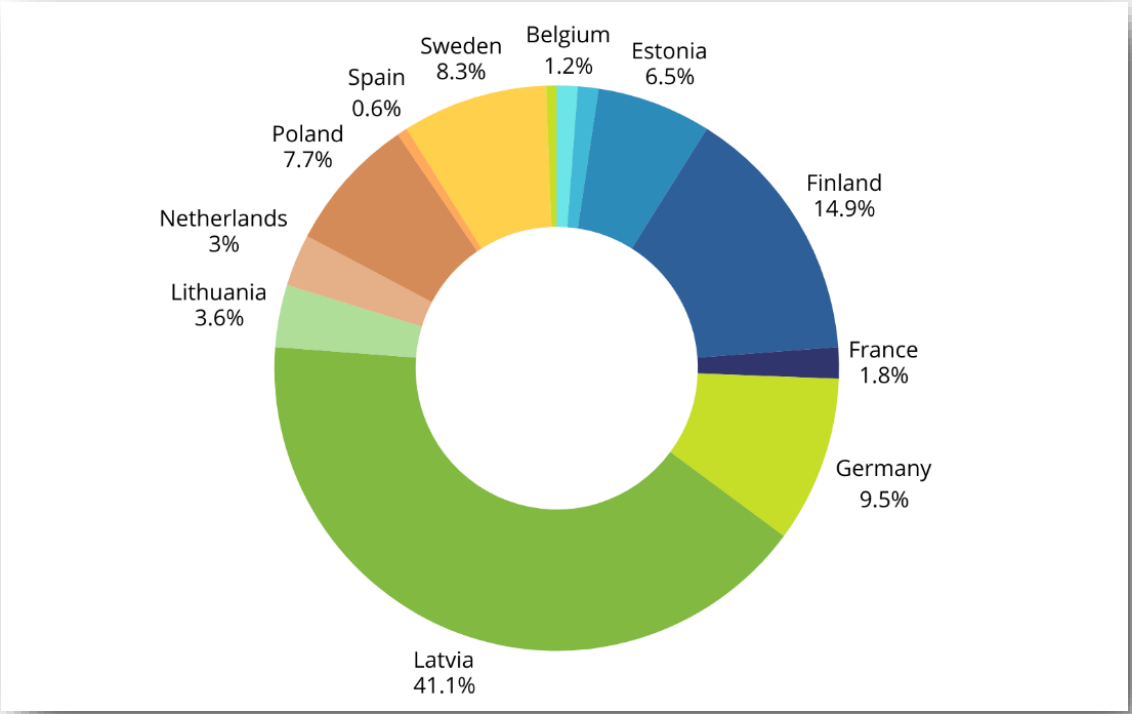

Figure1: Participants and their representation by countries at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum

The Forum featured insights from **59 speakers**, who contributed to discussions across plenary sessions, keynote speeches and **9 parallel sessions**, offering a wide range of perspectives and expertise.

Notably, for **123 participants**, this year marked their **first-ever experience** attending the Baltic MSP Forum. At the same time, **10 participants have attended all five Baltic MSP Forums**.

The Forum also featured **14 expo stands**, representing MSP and coastal planning approaches in the Baltic Sea region countries, demonstrating projects, tools, and initiatives that enriched the event with opportunities for hands-on exploration, networking, and knowledge exchange.

A video premiere **"A Journey Through the Baltic MSP Forums"** highlighted the evolution of all five Baltic MSP Forums. The video captures key milestones, shared achievements, and the growing collaboration within the Baltic Sea Region's MSP community.

Watch the recap video

All presentations

Summary of Plenary Sessions

Opening of Day 1

The Forum was opened by **Raimonds Čudars** – the Minister of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia. The opening speeches were also given by **Emilia Malak-Pętlicka**, the Deputy Director of the Strategy Department at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy of Poland and the Chair of the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the BSR, and **Kai Trümpler**, the Director of Spatial Planning at the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany and the Co-chair of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

Setting the Scene: Planners in a Changing World

The first keynote speech was given by **Diāna Rasuma**, the Director of Spatial Planning and Land Management Department, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, Lead partner of Baltic Sea2Land project. The keynote reflected on the journey of the Baltic Sea2Land project, highlighting its role in addressing the growing complexity of coastal and maritime spatial planning across the Baltic Sea region. She emphasized the need for integrated, multi-level governance to bring diverse voices together and foster sustainable coastal development, noting that effective stakeholder engagement is a relationship, not a checkbox.

Kira Gee, a senior scientist at Helmholtz Zentrum Hereon and Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH), Germany, gave the second keynote speech, which was the basis for further discussion, especially in the first panel discussion of the Forum. Kira's presentation – on MSP past, present and future: Charting a course in a changing world; was a quick summary of lessons learned about MSPs and where MSP is aiming – towards holistic, coherent plans where all interests are balanced.

Panel Discussion: Current Challenges in Maritime & Coastal Spatial Planning

Figure 2: Moderator and speakers at the panel discussion

The discussion in the first panel was about Current Challenges in Maritime & Coastal Spatial Planning. The panellists – **Felix Leinemann** Head of Unit for Blue Economy Sectors, Aquaculture and MSP, DG MARE, European Commission; **Kai Trümpler** the Director of Spatial Planning at the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany and the Co-chair of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.; **Mari Pohja-Mykrä** Ministerial Adviser at the Ministry of the Environment of Finland and representative of Finland in the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the BSR; **Kamil Rybka** Chair of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group; and **Helen Erik** Project Manager at Saaremaa Municipality, Estonia; shared their views on revision of the MSP Directive and adoption of the Ocean Act, the value of MSP for proper coordination of marine uses, usefulness of digital tools in the MSP process, importance of combining maritime and coastal spatial planning and engaging local communities. The audience had the opportunity to ask questions via Slido. The greatest interest was shown in the revision of the MSP Directive.

Watch the session recording

Interactive session: MSP and Coastal Planning Around the Baltic Sea

This session highlighted Baltic Sea Region's country challenges and good practices in maritime and coastal planning and invited the participants to join the country exhibition stands. Speakers:

- **Lembe Reiman** from Estonia explained how Estonia is turning complex maritime spatial planning challenges into opportunities through innovation, collaboration and clear vision for the future.
- **Anete Bērziņa** explained Latvia's holistic approach. For Lithuania, the Baltic Sea's ecological integrity was one of the priorities.
- **Malte Hvidsten** from Denmark talked about balancing interests and using digital tools.
- In Poland, as **Kamil Rybka** and **Ms. Magdalena Matczak** explained and showed – following law and cooperation among institutions were key aspects.
- **Bettina Käppeler** highlighted sustainable development of German marine areas.
- **Elin Celik** gave examples of coexistence of different sectors in Sweden.
- **Timo Rantanen** from Finland focused on building resilience.

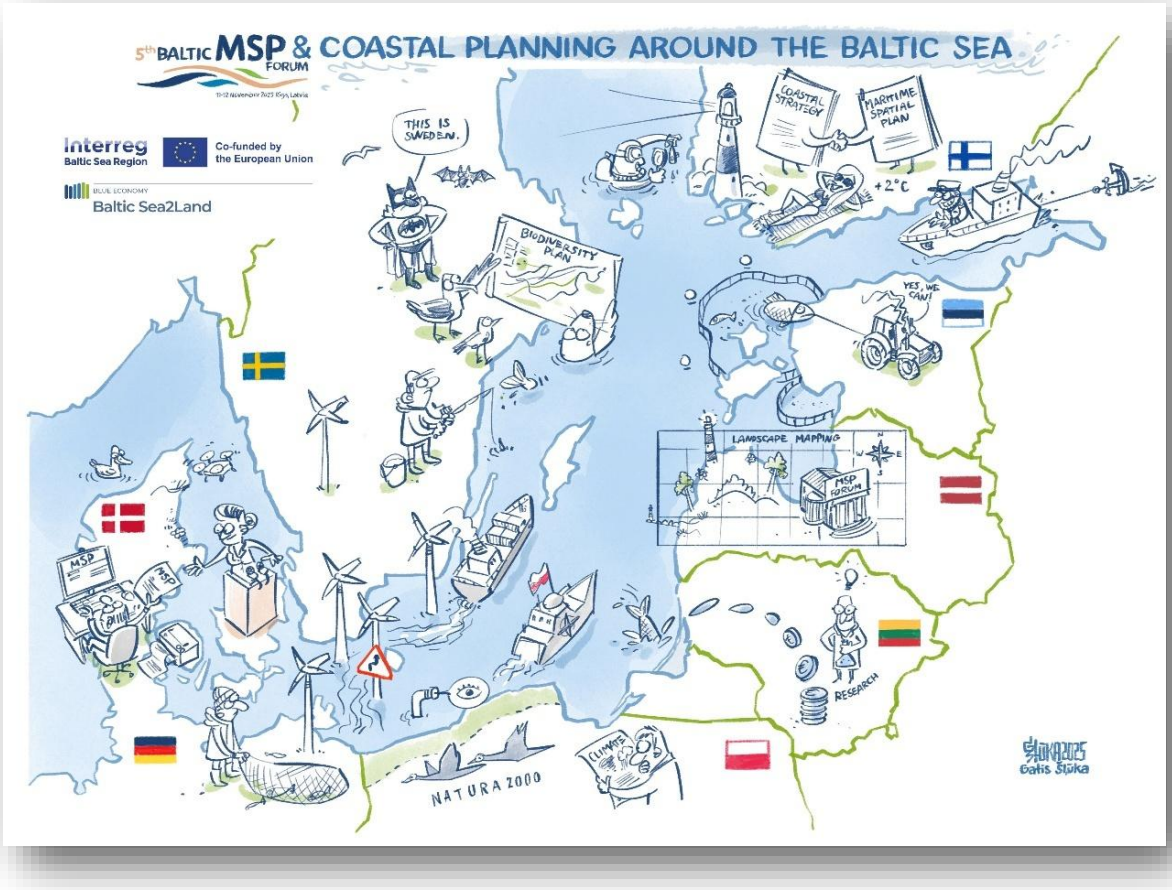

Figure 3: Illustration from the session "MSP and Coastal Planning around the Baltic Sea"

While the representatives were encouraging the Forum participants to visit the Expo stands, the famous Latvian cartoonist Gatis Šļūka had been preparing a piece of art. The drawing showed the power of imagination, the beauty of diversity and the importance of cohesion. The audience was impressed by Gatis' work and appreciated it with the great applause as it was an extraordinary reminder that we share one sea (see Figure 3).

Watch the session recording

Opening of Day 2

The second day of the Forum started with a screening of a video "Journey Through the Baltic MSP Forums", showcasing highlights from previous 4 Baltic MSP Forums.

To make everyone familiar with the key messages and outcomes from the parallel session of day 1, the recap, based on the slides prepared by the session leaders, was presented. All session summaries are available in this document section "Summaries of Parallel Sessions".

Keynote Speech on Ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning

The keynote speech – "The beginners guide to ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning – the why, what and how from the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group's EBA-taskforce" – was given by **Jan Schmidtbauer Crona** from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. Jan delivered a creative and inspiring keynote focused on the importance and implementation of ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning. His message centred on belief in MSP as a strategic planning tool that supports a sustainable Baltic future.

Panel Discussion: What Do We Mean as Ecosystem-based Approach (EBA) Planning & Management?

Figure 4: Moderator and speakers at the panel discussion

In the panel discussion speakers tried to find concrete answers to the question “What Do We Mean as EBA Planning & Management?”. The panellists - **Jan Schmidtbauer Crona**, **Ben Sass**, the Head of Project Development National Offshore and Legal Counsel Offshore Wind /PNE Group, Germany, **Marcin Kotlarek**, the CEO of non-profit Race for the Baltic, and **Nick Boxem**, Steering Group member for Greater North Sea Basin Initiative, Government of the Netherlands, Manager, Marine Policy Directorate Netherlands, shared their reflections on cooperation and synergies. The takeaway from the discussion was that we still need to work on enhancing communication among stakeholders to better understand the needs and find common ground. Engaging various sectors in the planning process at early stage is beneficial for all sides and gives the opportunity to create a plan that is widely accepted. It is important to be aware of cumulative pressures on the Baltic Sea and make those who create the pressures aware of the broader context.

Watch the session recording

Closing Session

The closing session summarised the Forum. First the recap from the last three parallel sessions was presented. The panel discussion "Reflections for a Resilient Future" engaged: **Philipp Arndt**, Maritime Spatial Planner at the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany, **Diāna Rasuma**, the Director of Spatial Planning and Land Management Department, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, **Andrea Morf**, Scientific Coordinator and Analyst at the Swedish Institute for the Marine Environment, University of Gothenburg, and **Jakub Turski**, MSP Senior Specialist at the Maritime Institute of Maritime University in Gdynia, Poland. Thanks to Slido the audience was also activated as a fifth panellist. There were three questions, same for every panellist – about what we learned at the Forum, what shifted and what is still open.

What we learned

- Integrated land–sea planning and cooperation across Baltic institutions is essential.
- MSP must balance ecological, economic, and security interests.
- Strong communities and people with time and expertise make plans work.
- Nature is the core and foundation of resilience and well-being.

What shifted

- Mindset moving from planning documents to active cooperation and delivery.
- Land–sea–community connections seen as one living system, not separate domains.
- Science–policy interface gaining importance — need for translators between data and decision.
- Greater openness to flexibility, creativity, and new partnerships across the Baltic and North Seas.
- Security, safety, and defense now recognized as integral parts of MSP.
- Local voices and communities becoming equal partners in planning processes.
- From top-down control toward bottom-up ownership and co-creation.
- Shared belief that MSP can deliver — "the power of a plan."

What's still open

- Defining what *resilience* truly means in MSP — process, plan, or outcome?
- Embedding ecological limits and biodiversity protection in all spatial decisions.
- Keeping MSP relevant amid shifting geopolitics and budget pressures.
- Turning foresight and scenarios into concrete national and local actions.
- Achieving real policy coherence between MSP, EUSBSR, and BSAP objectives.
- Making planning flexible yet accountable — dynamic without chaos.
- Ensuring data sharing, institutional capacity, and next-generation skills to sustain the work.

Based on all answers Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT of OpenAI) was used to prepare summarising roadmap to support planning processes in the future. See result in Figure 5.

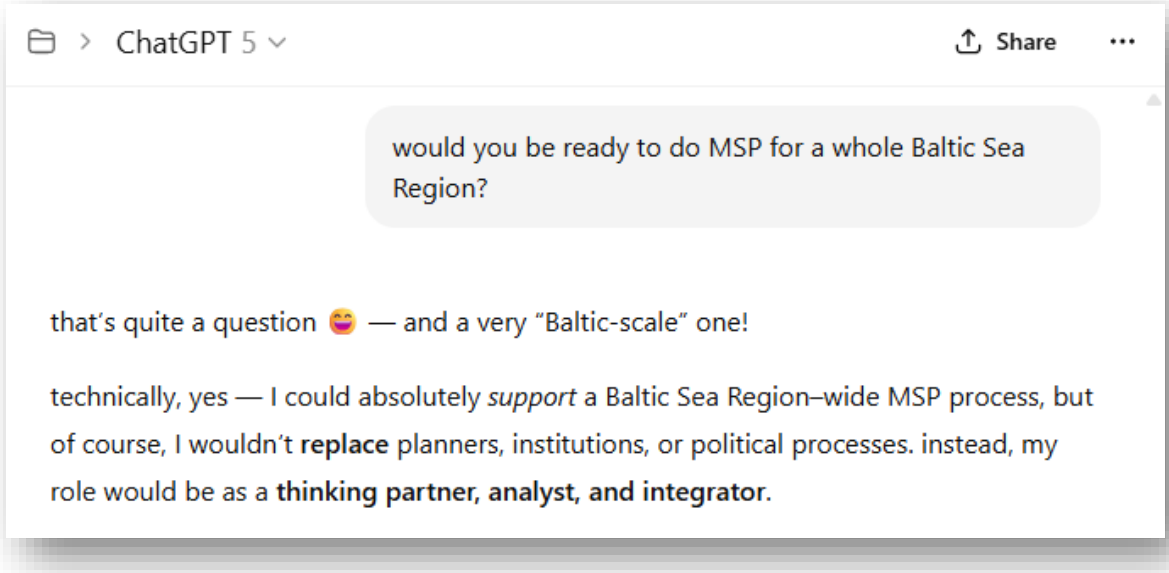

Figure 5: A Human–AI Collective Roadmap for Navigating Planning Through Changes and Building a Resilient Future

Surely AI will not replace humans – experts and stakeholders with knowledge, experience, and skills will continue to cooperate and advance in the face of challenges; however, new tools, including AI, can significantly bolster these efforts (see Figure 6).

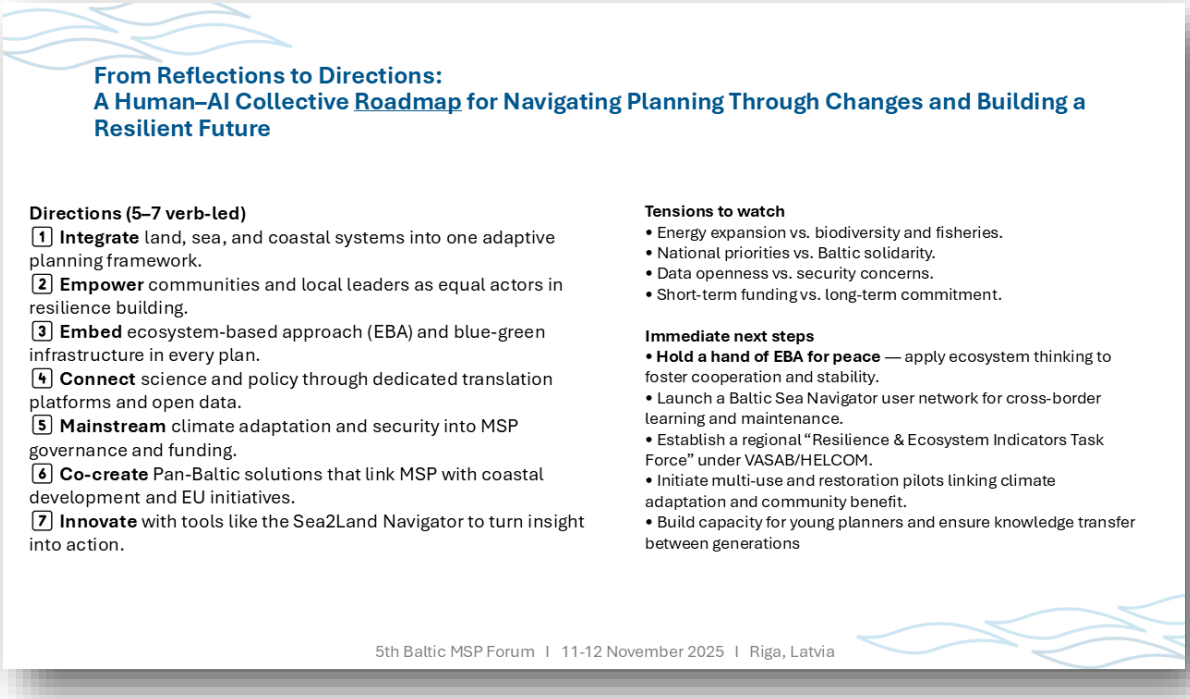

Figure 6: Screenshot from ChatGPT

The final closing words of the Forum were given by **Anete Bērziņa** representing the lead partner of the Baltic Sea2Land project, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, and **Mārtiņš Ulāns**, Head of VASAB Secretariat.

Watch the session recording

EXPO at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum

Figure7: Photos from the exhibition area at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum

The 5th Baltic MSP Forum featured a professional exhibition area showcasing 14 exhibition stands. Eight Baltic Sea Region countries (**Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden**) were represented, each presenting the latest developments in maritime spatial planning and coastal planning. Their displays highlighted current challenges, innovative approaches, and emerging good practices across the region.

In addition to national representations, partners from the Baltic Sea2Land project introduced – the **Sea2Land Navigator** – a tool developed within the project. The EXPO provided participants with a valuable opportunity to explore how this tool can support planners and enhance decision-making processes.

The exhibition area also brought together regional organisations and initiatives, including **HELCOM**, **VASAB**, **Nordregio**, **SUBMARINER Network for Blue Growth**, and the **EUSBSR Policy Areas Spatial Planning, Energy and Safe**, further enriching the exchange of knowledge and collaboration at the event.

Summaries of Parallel Sessions

Session 1: Resilient and Liveable Coastal Communities

Figure 8: Summary slide of parallel session 1

Parallel session 1 examined shared challenges and practical solutions for building resilient and liveable coastal communities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), and how regional policy frameworks can better support territorial development. The session was moderated by **Mārtiņš Ulāns**, Head of the VASAB Secretariat.

Polish VASAB Chairmanship

Emilia Malak-Pętlicka presented the priorities of the Polish Chairmanship of the VASAB Committee (2025–2026), focusing on strengthening spatial and territorial resilience and advancing territorial cohesion. Poland will initiate targeted analysis on measuring territorial resilience in the BSR. Estonia's leadership concluded with the Tallinn Declaration on Spatial Resilience, confirming the region's commitment to resilience and cross-border cooperation.

She noted a tension between liveability—linked with green and scenic coasts—and resilience, often requiring substantial construction. Coastal communities face climate change, sea-level rise, economic pressures, technological demands and the growing need for green energy and security. International planning documents (Tallinn Declaration, VASAB and HELCOM recommendations, VASAB Vision 2040, the European Ocean Pact) and national planning tools are essential for providing scenarios and solutions. She also highlighted the Warsaw Declaration, calling for a unified EU territorial vision, and the concept of "exaptive resilience"—repurposing assets for new uses.

VASAB Vision 2040 and Coastal Recommendations

Margarita Vološina outlined the VASAB Vision that by 2040 all BSR places—rural areas, towns and cities—will offer high quality of life through their comparative advantages and

strong networks. Community-led initiatives are crucial in coastal territories where land–sea interactions and development pressures are interconnected.

VASAB Vision 2040 focuses on vibrant and inclusive communities, a green and resilient region, and an accessible, well-connected region — all supported by improved spatial planning governance — while for coastal areas the priorities include integrating land–sea interactions, ensuring balanced coastal development, strengthening coastal town networks, improving mobility, and safeguarding ecosystems.

The Tallinn Declaration recognises increasing uncertainty from climate impacts and geopolitical instability, demanding spatial preparedness so territories can absorb shocks and adapt. VASAB's 1996 Coastal Recommendations are being updated with support from the Baltic Sea2Land project and in coordination with HELCOM to better guide coastal and maritime planners.

European Ocean Pact and EU Strategy

Felix Leinemann from DG MARE presented the European Ocean Pact (adopted June 2025), the EU's plan for coherent ocean governance. Coastal communities are "stewards of the ocean" and central to achieving sustainable blue economy, healthy seas and maritime security. The Pact includes a dedicated priority for islands and coastal communities, recognising both their potential (aquatic food production, blue technology, renewable energy, maritime transport hubs) and their vulnerabilities: climate exposure, limited economic diversification, accessibility challenges and overtourism.

An EU-wide study is analysing socioeconomic and environmental conditions in coastal communities, home to nearly 95 million people. By summer 2026, the Commission will present a strategy for EU islands and coastal communities, with further consultation during European Ocean Days 2026.

Local Community Challenges

Āris Ādlers, Chair of LAG "Sea Land," described how community-led local development addresses climate change, population decline, shifts in traditional employment (e.g., fisheries), newcomer impacts, cultural heritage pressures, public service provision and environmental effects of offshore wind. Case studies showed opportunities: improved access to water, sustainable tourism and recreation management, coordinated territorial planning with stakeholders, reduced barriers for local entrepreneurship, and the importance of nature and heritage preservation.

Key Messages from Panel Discussion

Panellists stressed the need for stronger links between local communities, planners and policymakers.

Key messages:

- Communities: require capacities, initiative and clear priorities.
- Planners: must engage strong local communities to achieve suitable outcomes.
- Policymakers: need mechanisms enabling local leaders; local action groups are essential for coastal resilience.
- Future actions should focus on cooperation among planning levels and communities to strengthen social and territorial resilience in an unpredictable future.

Watch the session recording

Session 2: Integrating Ecosystem Services into Maritime Spatial Planning

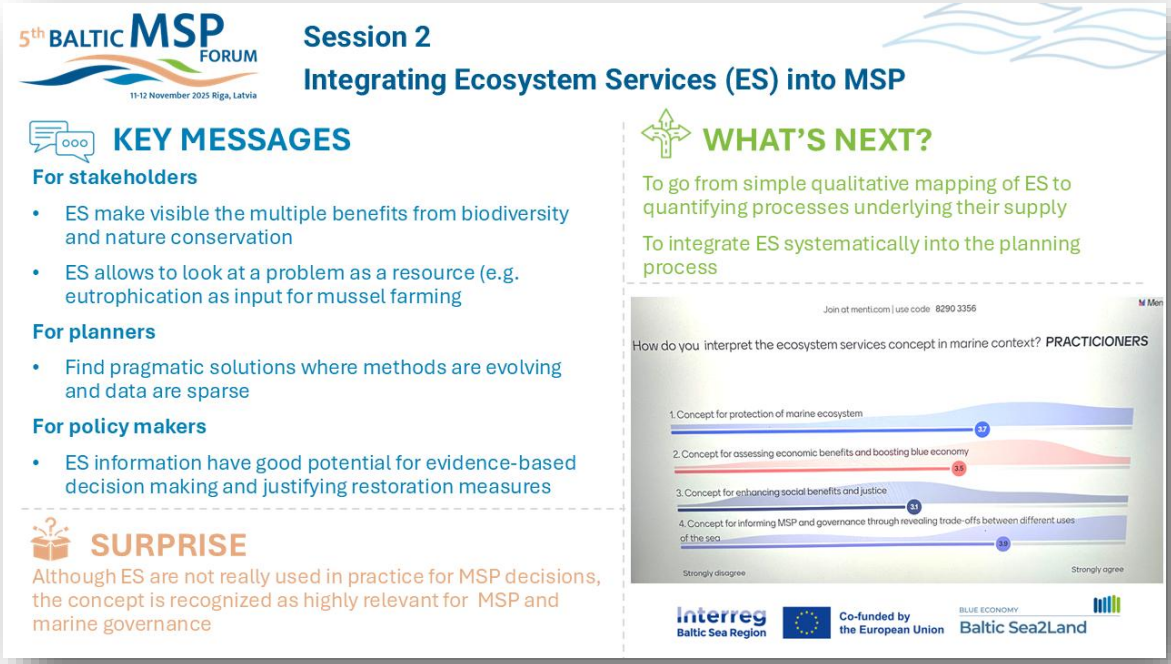

Figure 9: Summary slide of parallel session 2

The session aimed to explore the options for uptake of ecosystem service (ES) information in MSP as well as to discuss its use in strategies for sustainable management of marine ecosystems.

The session started with introduction by **Kristina Veidemane** (BEF – Latvia) to the ecosystem service concept and setting the scene of the session, followed by three presentations on uptake of ES information in marine management at various levels.

Max Vretborn (Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management) presented a Swedish approach to applying ES information in development of the national and regional environmental programmes of measures, by elaborating on its relevance for the actual decision making.

Essi Kärpijoki (Regional Council of Southwest Finland) demonstrated the uptake of ES in the Finnish MSP, which is being implemented regionally, in co-operation between eight coastal councils. One key example was shown where a study mapping marine areas valuable for ecosystem services (known as ESPA areas), which seeks to balance offshore wind power development with ecosystem service values, was incorporated with participatory mapping of areas important for cultural ES.

Finally, **Jonne Kotta** (University of Tartu) illustrated the applicability of ES modelling results to support local-scale business activities, such as Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA), by providing solutions that help reduce nutrient loads in the marine environment.

After presentations the participants were invited to share their views on the interpretation of the ES concept regarding its applicability in different marine management/policy contexts through an online survey. Votes from the three groups (policy makers, practitioners and

researchers) were similar, highlighting the primary importance of the concept for informing MSP and governance through revealing trade-offs between different uses of the environment. The second most important use of ES was for the protection and assessing economic benefits of marine ecosystems and was of the least relevance for enhancing social benefits and justice.

The following discussion focussed on advantages of using ES in policy making and planning across different contexts. Participants agreed that ES information has good potential for evidence-based decision making as well as justifying restoration measures, although so far it has been only really used in practice for MSP decisions. To increase the reliability of ES information, further research should focus on moving from simple qualitative mapping of ES towards quantifying processes underlying their supply, while planners should integrate ES systematically into the planning process.

Watch the session recording

Session 3: Sea2Land Navigator: Unlock Your Planning Compass

Figure 10: Summary slide of parallel session 3

The session ***Sea2Land Navigator: Unlock Your Planning Compass*** in practical training introduced participants to the Sea2Land Navigator, a comprehensive planning and decision-support tool designed to guide multi-level governance processes. After a brief welcome and overview by **Anete Bērziņa** (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia), **Anu Printsmann** (Tallinn University) and **Manuel Frias** (HELCOM Secretariat), participants learnt about the Navigator's structure and purpose, including its role in supporting long-term planning from initial scoping to final decision-making. Through the example, participants explored key features such as situation scoping, mapping current conditions, defining planning questions, and used the integrated Data Hub for spatial exploration. They also created personal user IDs to enable interactive tasks and ensure that progress is recorded and shareable.

The second part of the session guided participants through stakeholder mapping, one of the core elements of effective planning. Using the Navigator's tools, groups identified relevant sectors, list stakeholders, and evaluate each stakeholder's impact and influence through a relationship matrix. This structured approach helped uncover governance dynamics, clarify roles, and support communication strategies. Although the session covered only a part of the Navigator—primarily situation scoping and stakeholder mapping—it highlighted how the tool supports structured planning process, collaboration, documentation, and contributes to informed decision-making. Participants concluded by sharing feedback on their user experience and were encouraged to continue exploring additional sections and training resources, including the online course.

The Sea2Land Navigator was described by session leaders as a true "game changer" for planners and policymakers seeking to improve decision-making. Many participants praised

the tool's potential. As Nick Boxem, Head of the Marine Policy Directorate of the Netherlands Government, afterwards stated: "*I am impressed about the Sea2Land Navigator system.*"

The Navigator development team's answer to several questions from the audience about maritime spatial planning was simple – "Use the Navigator!"

Although the Baltic Sea2Land project is finalising, the Sea2Land Navigator will continue to be refined and applied in other MSP-related projects, for example Interreg BSR Platforms Baltic PlaNet and SEABAS.

Watch the session recording

Session 4: Tackling Consequences of Climate Change in Coastal Municipalities

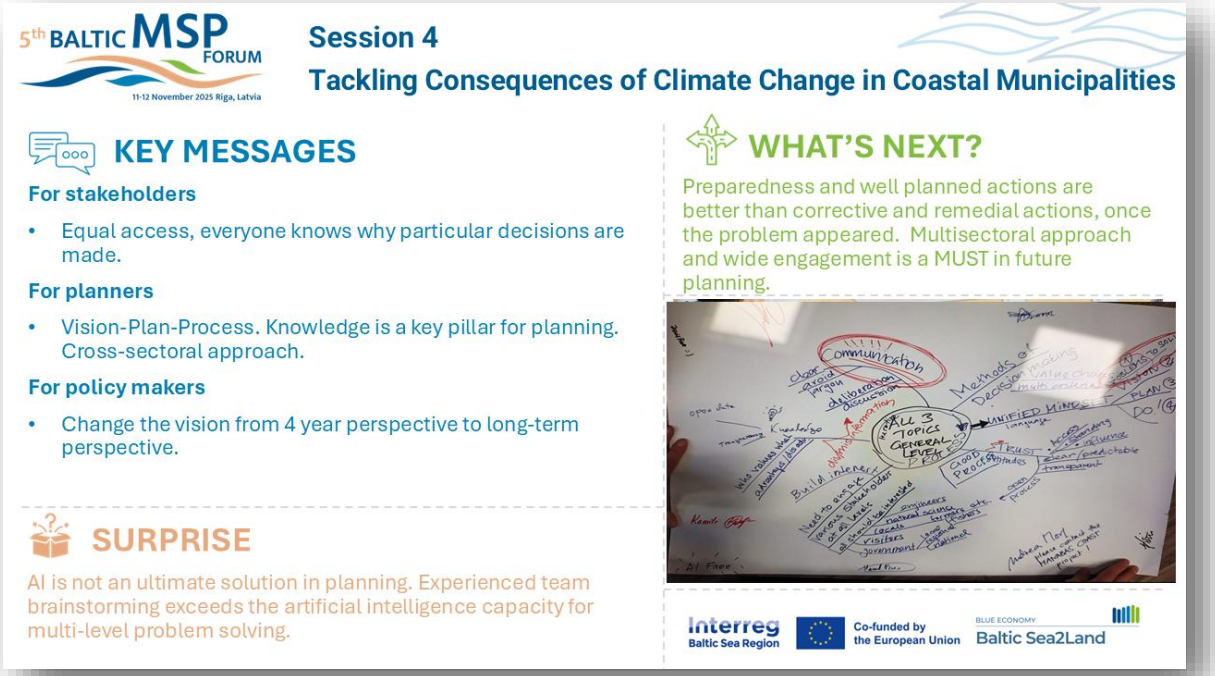

Figure11: Summary slide of parallel session 4

The Session ***Tackling Consequences of Climate Change in Coastal Municipalities*** focused on sand beach management, flood protection and sea grass restoration and it addressed the challenges of climate change for coastal municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region. Participants explored innovative approaches and best practices in three key areas:

1. Sand beach management: Discussion of techniques for the conservation and regeneration of beaches in the face of rising sea levels and increasing coastal erosion. Presented by **prof. Jānis Lapinskis** (University of Latvia).

2. Flood protection: Presentation of modern protection measures and nature-based solutions for adapting to extreme weather events and storm surges. Presented by **prof. Tymon Zielinski** (Institute of Oceanology Polish Academy of Sciences).

3. Seagrass restoration: Discussion of the ecological and coastal protection significance of seagrass meadows and methods for their reintroduction and maintenance. Topic introduced by **Martin Noël Lampe** and **Tobias Pootz**, (Just 1 Ocean Diver e.V., Germany).

In the second part of the workshop, group discussions and practical exercises to promote the exchange of knowledge between participants took place. Experts from science, administration and practice shared their experiences and jointly developed ideas for strategies for sustainable coastal development.

Watch the session recording

Session 5: Integrating Blue-Green Infrastructure in MSP

Figure 12: Summary slide of parallel session 5

The ***Integrating Blue-green Infrastructure in Maritime Spatial Planning*** session consisted of three presentations and a discussion with maritime spatial planning experts. The focus of the session was on the challenges and developments made in implementation of the marine green infrastructure concept in the Baltic Sea, experience-sharing from Finland and Sweden, and paving the path forward.

The first presentation given by **Anda Ruskule** (BEF Latvia) outlined the concept of green infrastructure (GI) as defined by the European Commission, the challenges that have been faced in its application in marine context, but also advances made in the Baltic Sea region through several projects, such as PanBaltic Scope and Protect Baltic. It was highlighted that although understanding connectivity in marine environment is a challenge, it is also one of the most urgent aspects to consider as the recovery of nature and delivery of ecosystem services rely on it, and current understanding on it remains insufficient.

The following two presentations brought perspectives from Finland's and Sweden's approaches and recent experiences with the MGI concept. **Frank Hering** (Regional Council of Kymenlaakso) outlined the steps taken during the last few years towards the consideration of a blue-green infrastructure map marking in Finland through pilot work conducted in the Baltic Sea2Land project on regional and national planning levels. Questions of available data, planning scale and transferability of planning solutions to stakeholders were central in the pilot experiences.

The final presentation was given by **Jan Schmidtbauer Crona** (Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management) on experiences and approaches on the theme in Sweden's maritime spatial planning. The current Swedish MSP supports the green infrastructure consideration through different components, such as the designation of areas for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (N-areas) and areas for co-existence where other uses are possible, but nature values

need to be simultaneously considered (n-areas). Nevertheless, implementing the MGI still requires further work. It was stressed that there should be better integration between national MPA and MSP processes - mutual understanding, coordination and data sharing would bring value to both processes.

In the discussion moderated by **Kristina Veidemane** (BEF Latvia) a few key themes arose. Firstly, a seabasin approach and cross-border collaboration are central to safeguarding ecological connectivity and holistic MGI considerations. Secondly, there is a need to go beyond classic protection measures (MPAs) and consider nature values more broadly to ensure ecosystem health and functionality. Baltic sea level assessment of green infrastructure makes sense as connectivity across the seabasin is crucial. Finally, it was discussed that the role of ecosystem services and linking nature to economic value can be debated, but if showing economic value is a way to make visible the importance of nature, it should not be overlooked. The participants supported discussion with reflection on mechanisms to ensure effective protection and management of high-value natural areas. A combination of strong legal frameworks, clear governance mechanisms, and supportive policy tools is essential. Legal protection must be robust, with clear designation, appropriate strict protection, and well-defined management responsibilities. Broader frameworks such as the Espoo Convention, the EU Ocean Act, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy can provide essential political support for these measures.

Watch the session recording

Session 6: Coastal Accessibility: A Multi-level Perspective on Challenges and Solutions in the Baltic Sea Region

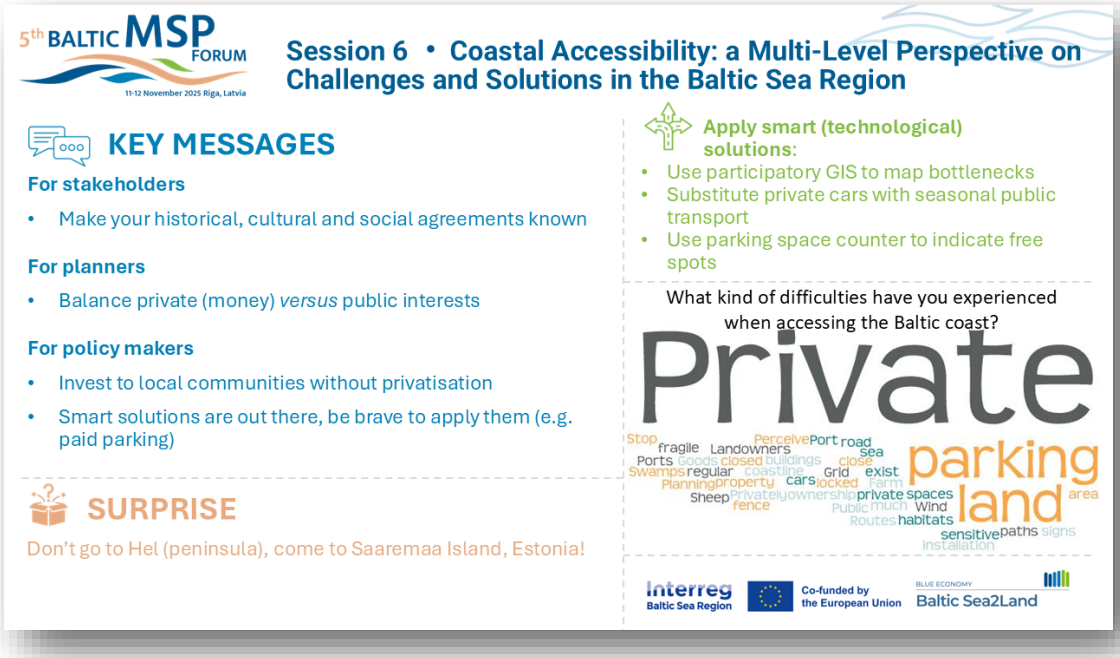

Figure13: Summary slide of parallel session 6

The session brought together researchers, municipal representatives, and planners to explore how coastal access is evolving across Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. While the contexts differ, a shared theme emerged: coastal areas face increasing pressure from environmental change, tourism dynamics, and the growing tension between public access and private interests. Ensuring fair, sustainable, and well-managed land- and seaward access requires coordinated action across all governance levels—national, regional, and local—supported by transparent decision-making and community engagement.

Speakers at the session:

- Visitor flow management along the Baltic Sea coast in Latvia: identified changes over 10 years. **Andris Klepers**, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia
- Sustainable coastal accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region: challenges and solutions from the perspective of Polish coastal municipalities. **Jacek Zaucha**, University of Gdańsk, Poland
- Navigating Saaremaa coastal challenges: balancing access, sustainability, and tradition in the Baltic Sea Region. **Helen Erik**, Saaremaa Municipality, Estonia

The session examined coastal accessibility as a shared regional challenge, shaped by social expectations, environmental sensitivities, land-use conflicts, and the growing intensity of recreational use along the Baltic Sea. Across the Baltic Sea Region, participants highlighted how increasing visitor numbers, changing mobility patterns, and the seasonality of coastal tourism put pressure on public infrastructure, local communities, and fragile coastal ecosystems. At the same time, historical pathways, traditional livelihoods, and cultural landscapes remain central to how coastal communities define fairness and belonging. The

session underscored that accessibility is not simply about reaching the coastline—it is about maintaining coastal areas as shared, meaningful public spaces.

Discussions revealed a common tension between public and private interests. Shoreline privatisation, new housing development, boat-landing conflicts, and the commercialisation of coastal spaces restrict long-standing community access. Meanwhile, inadequate or unevenly distributed infrastructure—parking capacity, soft-mobility routes, public transport, and maintained access points—shapes how crowding, environmental impact, and user experience unfold on the ground. presenters noted that while many challenges are highly localised, solutions require coordinated, multi-level governance frameworks that offer clarity, balance, and long-term commitment.

The session also showcased a growing toolbox of practical and technological solutions. Smart parking systems with license-plate recognition and parking-space counters, seasonal public transport, and visitor-flow forecasting were presented as cost-effective ways to manage peak-day congestion. Participatory GIS and community-based mapping help identify bottlenecks, reveal informal agreements, and support planning decisions that reflect local knowledge. Improvements to trails, soft-mobility networks, and coastal infrastructure were highlighted as key to steering visitors away from sensitive areas and reducing anthropogenic pressure. Importantly, the session emphasised that solutions exist—what is often missing is the courage to implement them.

Across stakeholder groups, several clear messages emerged: stakeholders should articulate their historical, cultural, and social access rights ensuring these are not overlooked in favour of purely economic interests; planners must balance economic incentives with public benefit, recognising access as a public good; policy makers should invest in coastal communities without promoting further privatisation; and all levels of governance should be open to smart, evidence-based tools that improve accessibility while safeguarding nature. The session concluded that strengthening trust, transparency, and collaboration—supported by data, technology, and community engagement—will be essential for ensuring fair, resilient, and sustainable access to the Baltic Sea coast in the years ahead.

Watch the session recording

Session 7: Advancing Transboundary Governance: Baltic and North Sea Challenges and Prospects

Figure 14: Summary slide of parallel session 7

The session ***Advancing Transboundary Governance: Baltic and North Sea Challenges and Prospects*** brought together experts, practitioners, and MSP stakeholders to examine how cooperation across sea basins can become more adaptive, inclusive, and coherent. Moderated by **Magdalena Matczak** (Gdynia Maritime University - GMU), the session aimed to identify practical pathways for strengthening transboundary governance and to highlight how cross-basin learning can future-proof MSP-related structures in Europe. The session opened with a Slido question prompting participants to reflect on what leads to failure in cooperation—surfacing early concerns such as weak implementation, insufficient capacity, and the absence of trust or dialogue.

Prof. Christian Zuidema (Groningen University) set the scene with a compelling presentation on the future of the North Sea, emphasizing the enormous spatial demands ahead: offshore wind targets increasing from 33 GW to over 300 GW, significant ecological pressures, and mounting expectations for nature restoration. He highlighted three core constraints of such a change: ecological space, physical space, and institutional capacity. Ecological space is limited by contested interpretations of the ecosystem-based approach and gaps in ecological knowledge. Physical space is restricted by dynamic policy choices and competing claims, requiring scenario-based planning and integrated infrastructure approaches. Zuidema underscored that international MSP is not merely beneficial but essential to cope with such challenges. Coordinated planning can reduce costs, minimize environmental impacts, and unlock tens of gigawatts of additional capacity—yet national differences, fragmented processes, and reluctance to formalize cooperation remain major barriers.

Prof. Jacek Zaucha (GMU) and Juul Kusters (Groningen University) presented an overview of existing cooperation structures in the Baltic and Greater North Sea regions, drawing on

insights from the NESB project. While both regions host a rich network of collaboration formats—from the formal HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group to more informal North Sea MSP groups—cohesion often breaks down at jurisdictional boundaries. There is a clear need for more flexible, agile structures that can adapt to emerging technologies, regulatory gaps, and new cross-border projects.

Reflections by **Nick Boxem** (Government of the Netherlands, Manager, Marine Policy Directorate Netherlands, GNSBI Steering group member) and **Kai Trümpler** (Director of Spatial Planning, Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany, Co-chair of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG) highlighted urgent needs such as enhancing visibility of cooperation processes, fostering trust, clarifying mandates, and balancing formal and informal elements of collaboration.

Breakout discussions confirmed these priorities: participants emphasized shared challenges, the necessity of learning from one another, the importance of dialogue, and the need for a more inclusive and binding form of transboundary governance built on mutual trust and understanding. The group work used a structured 1–2–4 method. Participants first reflected individually, then in pairs, and finally in table groups to identify urgencies, assess the fitness of current cooperation structures, and imagine ideal collaboration formats. The results revealed several recurring themes:

- **Shared challenges require shared solutions**, especially in energy transition, ecosystem management, and resource use.
- **Dialogue and mutual learning are essential**, as "there is no knowledge without exchange."
- **Ideal collaboration is inclusive, binding, trust-based**, and able to influence policy.
- Participants stressed the need for **exchange spaces**, clearer aims, better alignment of regulations, joint resource management, and more flexible combinations of formal and informal cooperation styles.

Work on these themes will continue within the **Northern European Sea Basins project (NESBproject)**, ensuring ongoing collaboration, exchange, and development of improved transboundary governance mechanisms.

Watch the session recording

Session 8: Safety and Security of Supply at the Baltic Sea

Figure15: Summary slide of parallel session 8

Maritime sectors' resilience and preparedness through cross-border collaboration were at centerstage in *Session 8* - ***Safety and Security of Supply at the Baltic Sea*****.** The session started with a presentation by **Justus Joenaalto** from Capful on the results of a study commissioned by the Finnish MSP Coordination Group (MSP FI) on comprehensive security in marine areas and maritime sectors' role in security of supply in Finland. After the presentation, a panel discussion was held between maritime logistics representative **Jaak Viilipus** from Nordic Marine Advisory Group, a grid infrastructure representative **Ansis Žbanovs** from Latvian electricity transmission system operator (AS Augstsprieguma tīkls) and MSP experts **Jonas Bjärnstedt** from Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and **Mari Pohja-Mykrä** from Ministry of Environment (Finland).

At the start of the session, three different scenarios on Baltic Sea security were presented. The scenarios, created in the study commissioned by MSP FI, ranged from an active military conflict at Baltic Sea with a weakened EU-role to a pacified situation where tensions in the Baltic Sea have reduced, but economic investments and rapid construction at sea are creating challenges. The scenarios were seen as thought-provoking, and potential was seen in creating a shared security-focused set of scenarios for the entire Baltic Sea. This could work as a basis for drafting coordinated responses to threats, which were strongly called for. Presented key areas where maritime spatial planning can contribute to security and resilience include multidisciplinary and international cooperation, building knowledge-base and a proactive foresight approach.

During the panel discussion it was stated that security issues have previously been considered in MSP only on a surface level through incorporation of the defence forces' requirements. However, the perspective has significantly changed, and there is a need for holistic reflection on the role of marine areas when it comes to security. The maritime sectors play a crucial role in this. For the logistics sector, it is clear that a global perspective is needed

when thinking of threats such as shadow fleets. The Baltic Sea countries have good existing cooperation, but such issues cannot be tackled solely on a macro-regional level. On the other hand, with grid infrastructure the focus is very much on the Baltic Sea level and connections to central Europe. After the Russian invasion in Ukraine, European energy self-sufficiency and the protection of related critical infrastructure from threats and attacks has become crucial. International cooperation regarding these developments is integral and already ongoing.

There was a consensus among the panellists that MSP cannot take leadership in responding to security threats, but it can play an important role in supporting it through spatial solutions. Offering a platform for stakeholders to discuss related issues and contributing to shared understanding has great value. It was highlighted that information is key, no matter what the security issue. Although we live in an information age, information is scattered between different authorities and countries. There is also a need for information sharing withing organisations so that cooperation and knowledge is not dependent on a few individuals. Finally, the importance of psychological resilience was also stressed, and the role MSP can have in building it.

Watch the session recording

Session 9: Effective Use of Space for a Sustainable Blue Economy: Baltic Approaches to Multi-Use in Marine and Coastal Areas

Figure 16: Summary slide of parallel session 9

The session **"Effective Use of Space for a Sustainable Blue Economy: Baltic Approaches to Multi-Use in Marine and Coastal Areas"** at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum brought together practitioners, authorities and researchers to examine current progress and emerging opportunities for multi-use solutions in the Baltic and North Sea. Organised by the SUBMARINER Network and VASAB Secretariat, the event gathered 40 participants and introduced recent studies and pilot activities across the region. Presentations addressed:

- technical, regulatory and governance insights from multi-use analyses in the German EEZ presented by **Bettina Käppeler**, Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, Germany.
- Nordic experiences with coexistence between offshore wind and fisheries presented by **Kerstin Bly Joyce**, Nordregio.
- The Maripark concept as an innovation-oriented framework for accelerating multi-use deployment presented by **Kinnie De Beule**, Blue Cluster.
- The ULTFARMS project presented by **Alexander Ziemba**, Deltares, contributed practical lessons from ongoing low-trophic aquaculture and restoration pilots in offshore wind farms.

A live Slido exercise was used to explore stakeholder expectations regarding feasibility, barriers and policy pathways. Participants broadly agreed that significant multi-use implementation is likely within an 8 to 12 year horizon, signalling that the sector is progressing but not yet ready for rapid large-scale deployment. The discussion revealed that the most significant constraints lie not in technical feasibility but in economic and regulatory enabling conditions in both the Baltic and North Sea regions. Unclear business models, limited bankability and insurance challenges were identified as the primary bottlenecks, closely

followed by permitting fragmentation. These issues highlight the need for predictable long-term planning frameworks so that both offshore wind developers and secondary users can invest with confidence. Participants also emphasised that, much like offshore wind in its early stages, secondary uses will require targeted financial support to become commercially viable.

When reflecting on strategic priorities, participants identified offshore wind combined with restoration and nature-inclusive design as the most relevant and impactful multi-use pathway for both the Baltic and North Sea basins. This preference reflects growing alignment between MSP, biodiversity objectives and the requirements of the EU Nature Restoration Law. Overall, the session underscored that while technical feasibility is advancing, progress now depends on enabling governance: coherent regulation, large-scale demonstration sites, cross-sector integration and targeted financial instruments and support to accelerate the transition from pilots to commercial-scale multi-use in the Baltic and North Sea basins.

Watch the session recording

"The 5th Baltic MSP Forum was not just a conference – it was a celebration of our achievements and appreciation of the values that we share. It was possible because of a few factors. First of all, all Baltic Sea Region countries have adopted MSP plans and the work on their revision is in many cases in progress. Secondly, most of us know each other quite well, we treat each other as colleagues and sometimes even as friends. We are more united than ever before because of the threat of war. We appreciate that we can meet physically. And we are getting older. Just like our MSPs. And the Baltic Sea. Maritime and coastal planning is a relay race. Our period of life is a fraction of the life of our sea. But we have powerful tools that will outlast us and solve even the hardest problems – MSP, love and trust. Hopefully, we will elaborate on that further during the 6th Baltic MSP Forum."

Natalia Zajac, moderator of the 5th Baltic MSP Forum

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