

Designation of marine protected areas according to Natura 2000 criteria – EE, LV, LT

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Integrating coherent strategies covering the risk-dimension (prevention to response) into planning and investment

2. Key Approaches

- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Analysis based on a combination of different criteria to assess the suitability of potential marine protected areas as well as the possible re-definition of protected areas as new knowledge becomes available.

4. Overview of the case

According to HELCOM recommendations, it is suggested to create a network of marine protected areas in the Baltic. The assessment of potential sites (including potential threats) as well as starting legal designation procedures and management plans was facilitated. It also includes promotion of trans-boundary networking and capacity building on marine protected areas between the Baltic States, other EU Member States and Russia.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Baltic Sea contains a large number of unique eco-systems, biotopes and species of great natural value. However, coastal and marine areas are deteriorating with very poor water quality in some areas brought about by different kinds of human activities which, in several respects, are increasing due to the political changes in Eastern Europe,

b) Objectives

The overall objective is the protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the Eastern Baltic Sea (coastal and offshore waters of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). In this context implementing the EU's Natura 2000 network in marine areas is a key instrument. Also, assessing and reducing the impact of fishery by-catch on target bird and mammal species and assessing and addressing other threats to marine Natura 2000 sites (e.g. caused by constructions /developments, disturbance of species by economic or recreational activities, pollution). Increasing public and stakeholder awareness on Natura 2000, marine protected areas and biodiversity in general in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. Promoting trans-boundary networking and capacity building on marine protected areas between the Baltic States, other EU Member States and Russia.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

The process is decentralised and parallel, occurring simultaneously in all three Baltic States,. However in all states the methodology to define and assess is being commonly developed. In Lithuania, the national authorities involved in this development are the Protected Territories Authority of the Ministry of Environment and the administrations of the National Park of the Curonian spit and The Seaside Regional Park. The process of reshaping the limits and the status of the protected territories includes the documentation preparation including the management plan for selected protected territories.

b) ICZM tools

The ICZM tools in this case study fall within the legislative and planning categories. They are pertinent mainly to spatial planning and multi-sectoral management planning. The areas of protected coastal nature territories are divided into different zones. The aim of the work is to optimise and improve the protected areas network. A foreseen change includes reshaping the boundaries of protected territories based on the new knowledge of protected values, change of the status of protected territories based both on potential impact studies and re-assessment of biodiversity and habitats. Therefore, it includes territorial planning and management plan preparation prior to legal activities.

7. Cost and resources

Information not available.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

This case study provides a clear way to develop and improve a legislative basis to protect endangered species as well as valuable habitats by applying a differential approach. Legislative measures as well as management plans are to ensure the effectiveness of the activities.

9. Success and Fail factors

The main factors responsible for the success of the activity are the analysis quality and further legislative reinforcement actions taken by the central (Ministry of Environment) and local practises by the administration of protected territories.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The case study showed quite different impacts of harbour activities on potential protected areas in the different countries depending on the dominating currents and dumping activities. An exemplary reserve dedicated to the protection of the single fish species Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax*) is planned to be established.

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13. Sources

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