

Integrating the environmental component into the Baltic Sea MSP puzzle

The Baltic Sea is a puzzle of ports and harbours, fishing vessels, shipping and transportation lanes, leisure boating, pipelines, an increasing number of wind farms and much more. Maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea is therefore best understood as trying to solve a 3D puzzle: several moving elements must be arranged from surface to seabed – preferably without harming one another. The question is, how can we ensure that there is space for nature alongside the needs of our societies?

Humans, our activities and marine life often cross borders at sea with little notice, yet maritime spatial planning (MSP) processes have so far remained largely national. To solve the puzzle, there is a need to both harmonize maritime spatial planning processes across the Baltic Sea countries and to integrate the environmental component, Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), more coherently into the planning processes. This has been acknowledged by the countries, and steps have been taken – but the puzzle is not solved yet.

Project platform SEABAS, with altogether 13 partner organizations including Institute of Oceanology, Polish Academy of Sciences (IO PAN), contributes to these high-level commitments the surrounding nine Baltic Sea countries have made. The project, co-funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region, aims to address the key objectives from the Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 related to incorporating ecosystem-based planning into national processes at a regional level. SEABAS targets Objective 3.2, 'Develop a Baltic SEA framework including themes, common data, assessment methods for impact evaluation, cross-border consultations', and Objective 3.5, 'Promote the use of methods and tools in MSP for assessing cumulative environmental and other impacts of sea-based activities'.

Addressing these objectives benefits the whole Baltic Sea region, including the blue economy, societies and biodiversity. By solving this puzzle, SEABAS helps the Baltic Sea countries align their maritime spatial plans with the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and the European Green Deal.

But what will SEABAS actually provide, and who will benefit? And what is in it to solve the puzzle?

In this short video, a few of the SEABAS project partners will answer these questions and leave you wanting to learn more. You can follow [SEABAS on LinkedIn](#) for further insights into the project's progress, and don't forget to check [the SEABAS website](#) for more information.