The 8th Steering Group of Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning on Maritime Spatial Planning

09-10 November 2026, online

(9-2026 SG EUSBSR PA SP on MSP)

The Steering Group was attended by representatives of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as well as by the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. HELCOM observers were represented by Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB)and International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification. The Steering Group was also attended by invited guests representing the EU MSP Assistance Mechanism, the Finnish Meteorological Institute for presenting the WATERWAYS project and from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management to present the work of the OSPAR InterSteering Groupal Correspondence Group on Offshore Renewable Energy Development (ICG-ORED) on decommissioning offshore wind energy installations.

The Steering Group was chaired by the Kai Trümpler, Germany and Jan Schmidtbauer Crona, Sweden. Coordinators of Policy Area Spatial Planning Tina Šipkēvica (VASAB Secretariat) and Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky (HELCOM Secretariat) acted as secretaries of the SG. Since the Steering Group meeting is an integral part of the nineth informal consultation Steering Group of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 9-2026), documents submitted to the Steering Group meeting and presentations are numbered accordingly.

Information on recent developments and activities related to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Action Plan and Policy area (PA) Spatial Planning

1. The Steering Group noted the information related to the developments and activities related to the EUSBSR and PA Spatial Planning (document 6-1 and presentation).
2. The Steering Group noted the information that Geir Arne Håland Nordhus from Norwegian Mapping Authority has been appointed as a Norwegian contact point for PA Spatial Planning.
3. The Steering Group welcomed the accession of Norway to the EUSBSR cooperation and recommended that the Norwegian representative joins the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG as a permanent invited guest. The Steering Group invited PA coordinators to communicate the invitation with Norwegian contact persons and undertake all formal registration procedures.
4. The Steering Group welcomed the information and expressed satisfaction with work of PA coordinators and progress achieved in the reporting period.
5. The Steering Group supported organizing the workshop with Interreg Baltic Sea Region MA/JS as part of IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 10-2026 (document 6-3). The Steering Group recommended allocation of two hours provisionally on Friday 9 April 2027 for the workshop and requested the Secretariats to shorten or postpone consideration of other PA Spatial Planning related issues to ensure that the required time is available.

6. The Steering Group further exchanged information on ongoing national activities related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of MSPs as follows:

   - The Danish 2023 political agreement on the Maritime Spatial Plan sets the framework for the MSP work in Denmark towards the next plan in 2033. Consequently, Denmark is bound to appoint further 2% strictly protected nature – an increase to 8% by 2028 – and reaching a total of 10% in 2030. We expect political negotiations about the appointment to begin in the end of this year. The following political agreement is expected to trigger an MSP amendment process. Other pressing issues from Denmark are:
     - Danish-Norwegian co-presidency of GNSBI from NOV 2027.
     - Denmark organized and hosted Nordic MSP Forum 2026 in SEP. Main theme was *Data*. The forum resulted in successful knowledge exchange and networking.
     - Development of a Danish CIA Tool, HAVANA, is in progress.
     - Continues focus and engagement in the process of Ocean Act.

     Regarding Monitoring and Evaluation, there are no significant developments since the last Steering Group of the group.

   - Finland didn't have any updates on M&E but that will launch after the new plan is adopted, the general MSP updates include informal consultation with over 50 comments to the preliminary draft plan, there are a lot of background reports, new 10 km coastal belt included in the plan map, three new designations on security and preparedness to showcase the matters for more detailed planning, environmental report is being prepared, the formal consultation phase will take place in spring 2027 and that the coastal regional councils need to adopt the draft plans by the end of 2027.

   - Germany: BSH has started the process to evaluate und monitor the maritime spatial plan 2021 covering the EEZ of North Sea and Baltic Sea. The steps undertaken so far are:
     - Development of the M&E concept, available online;
     - Collection of relevant data and analysis , statements submitted by competent public agencies;
     - Information hearing for public agencies in May 2026;
     - Regular meetings with scientific advisory board.

     The next steps are:
     - Completion of the evaluation report (draft) and coordination with responsible ministry;
     - 2nd information hearing (public agencies) 2027;
     - Publication of the evaluation report (planned early 2027).

     The topic of nature conservation aspects for MSP in the EEZ are underway by means of a study of the Federal Agency of Nature Conservation and based on that there might be a need to update the MSP.

   - Latvia: Work continues on the amendments of Latvian MSP. The Latvian team is closing on finishing updating the big chapter "description of the current situation". This includes characterizing various sectors as well as nature-based aspects. Work is being done updating the criteria and the activity-conflict analysis matrix is being updated as well. In the process we have also touched upon recommendations. This is being done in close cooperation with our coordination group. All of this involves evaluating the MSP – addressing the question of what has to change and what remains.

For every strategic goal of the MSP there are several activities. Latvian team has also looked at how some of those are going (will be paying more attention to this next year). Examples include number of research projects about aquaculture, and number of yacht visits. Basically the Latvian team is (and will be) monitoring how the goals and activities of MSP are progressing.

- Lithuania's Comprehensive Plan, which integrates MSP, is currently in the monitoring phase. The Plan was adopted in 2021, and monitoring of the Plan is carried out at least every five years. Therefore, in September 2026, we launched the preparation of a monitoring report, and the collected information is now being analysed and consolidated. The final report is expected to be finalised by the end of this year. The findings of the report will help assess progress in implementation and identify priorities for the coming period, as well as determine whether any updates to the Plan may be needed.

  The monitoring process covers the implementation of the Plan's objectives and spatial solutions, including key developments in maritime sectors. Preliminary findings indicate that offshore renewable energy and related infrastructure remain the most dynamic sector of MSP implementation in Lithuania.

  It should be noted that environmental aspects of the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon are monitored separately through dedicated environmental monitoring programmes. Also, as discussed during the Planners' Forum, nature restoration is currently addressed in Lithuania's Comprehensive Plan only through general provisions and does not include specific restoration measures subject to MSP monitoring. More detailed restoration measures are currently being developed under Lithuania's National Restoration Plan.

- Poland adopted remaining plans (still waiting for the publication in the National Journal of Law):
  - Regulation amending maritime spatial plan for the internal marine waters, the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone on a scale of 1: 200,000 – to cut areas overlapping with detailed plans;
  - Maritime spatial plan for waters adjacent to the coastline, in the stretch from Władysławowo to Łeba;
  - Maritime spatial plan for Gulf of Gdańsk;
  - Maritime spatial plan for port of Wałdysławowo;
  - Maritime spatial plan for port of Hel;
  - Maritime spatial plan for port of Gdynia;
  - Maritime spatial plan for port of Gdańsk.

  Also, regulation on required scope of maritime spatial plans was adopted, awaits publication in the National Journal of Law. New regulation is in line with HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure in the Baltic Sea. All new plans will have to follow this.

- The Swedish Government is considering the proposals for revised marine spatial plans submitted by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, SwAM, in January last year.

  Last year Sweden sent out the submitted plan proposals including the impact assessment to the Countries participating in the ESPOO-consultation for information, but also for providing another opportunity for commenting. As part of a Government assignment, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management in May 2026 provided feedback to the participating countries. The feedback report was also submitted to the Government for further consideration in the assessment of the plan proposals

In June 2026 the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management adopted a framework monitoring and evaluation framework. A start-up meeting with stakeholders including Swedish national agencies was held on 1st of October.

Finally, as for offshore-wind, in July this year the Government approved two new areas for offshore wind in the EEZ, one in the Guld of Bothnia and in the northern part of Skagerrak close to Norway. At the same time 11 applications were rejected due to defense interests. In total there are now 6 areas for offshore wind in EEZ, corresponding to 7 to 8 GW.

7. The Steering Group recommended to showcase the national M&E implementation examples and to prepare comparison with the EBA Guidelines relevant section for HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 10-2027.

Communication with stakeholders, PA SP promotion and visibility.

8. The Steering Group considered a proposal to organize regional cross-sectoral discussion on sustainable marine economy, utilizing the existing networks (e.g. EUSBSR, NESBp project etc.) to be organized in 2027 to produce the output, aiming for wider collaboration from other EUSBSR Policy Areas.
9. The Steering Group welcomed the offer to utilize the EUSBSR network to facilitate collaboration.
10. The Steering Group noted that Finland will take over the Presidency of the EUSBR in July 2027, and the next Annual Forum is planned to be held in Spring 2028.
11. The Steering Group supported the proposal and invited the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats, as coordinators of the Policy Area Spatial Planning, to discuss this matter with other Policy Areas Coordinators, including Finland, and to provide a more defined proposal to the next Steering Group of the group to further plan the event.

Strengthening regional policy coherence.

12. The Steering Group noted the progress of the Task Force for aligning and revision of HELCOM and VASAB Recommendations (document 3-4 and attachment). The Steering Group considered the proposed structure of the joint Recommendation as described in the document 3-4 and recommended its use as a starting point for further work, noting that there are ongoing internal discussions e.g. in Sweden that can be taken into account in further work.
13. The Steering Group noted the clarification on mentioning the Espoo Convention in the preambular part, meant to be operationalization of the EBA Guidelines, and that mentioning regulations on transboundary consultation can be considered in the future work for section 7 on transboundary and sea-basin level coherence. The Steering Group recalled the related revision process of the HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines on transboundary consultations (cf. document 5-3) that also has to be taken into consideration in further work for the new Recommendation.
14. The Steering Group noted the clarification on the further approval and adoption process for draft Recommendations, after the WG level recommendation in HELCOM involving the consideration by the Heads of Delegation (HOD) and adoption by the Commission. From VASAB side, Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) during its 99th meeting in Gdansk, Poland, 28 October 2026, was informed about necessary future decision form of approval of Recommendations and this form will be decided by CSPD/BSR prior to approval of Recommendations.
15. The Steering Group noted the proposal by CCB to include aspects on the importance of relevant spatial planning on land for e.g. buffer zones and reducing nutrient inputs to the sea.

16. The Steering Group noted that future work of the Task Force will concentrate on the content in spring 2027 and finetuning and commenting in the autumn 2027, including comparing the content of the upcoming draft Recommendation with the old recommendations to ensure possible gaps will be filled. The Steering Group further emphasized that an analysis of what's been added and what's been set aside or altered compared to the original recommendations is paramount for the drafting of the document's content.

17. The Steering Group took note of the VASAB Secretariat's view that the quality of the content is to be ensured through properly addressing all identified gaps, and also that the timeline for finalizing the revision is to be considered flexible due to uncertainty of related processes (e.g. the European Ocean Act expected around Q1 2027) and time needed for developing the content, which might delay the final delivery.

Supporting BSR MSP Data ESG.

18. The Steering Group considered the progress in the work of the Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-group (BSR MSP Data ESG) (document 4-1 and attachment). The Steering Group noted the progress made with implementing the workplan for 2025-2026 (attachment 1 to document 4-1).

19. The Steering Group recommended for approval the draft updated workplan for 2027-2028 with clarified outputs of task 10 and their consistency with the title of the task and agreed on the formulations.

20. The Steering Group discussed further development of HELCOM data sharing resources such as Basemaps in the light of EU digital transition. The Steering Group invited the HELCOM Secretariat together with the Chair of the BSR MSP Data ESG and EU Assistance Mechanism to further deliberate on possible resources available to support data sharing activities in the BSR.

21. The Steering Group noted that Mercator Ocean International, which coordinates some aspects of the EDITO platform development, has recently been granted HELCOM Observer status. The Steering Group encouraged the Secretariat to continue discussion and seek for funding opportunities to ensure up-to-date state of the Baltic Sea Regional MSP Platform portal and Basemaps and their interoperability with relevant EU platforms.

22. The Steering Group pointed out the relevance of task 7 in the draft workplan related to fisheries in the light of recent development under GNSBI, similarly to the current process on OWF data.

23. The Steering Group noted the information compiled in the document 4-2 and implementing task 6 in the workplan 2025-2026, and supported the plan to accomplish the task on OWF data. The Steering Group welcomed the information about the questionnaire on the OWF data which has been circulated to BSR MSP Data ESG members. The Steering Group invited the Secretariat to contact representatives of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG if any specific actions are needed to support the work.

24. The Steering Group clarified the issue of public availability of potentially sensitive data and noted that it is one of the topics considered by the survey, aiming to gather as much data as possible but utilizing sensitive or restricted data only for the analysis.

25. The Steering Group noted the last developments of the EU Technical Expert Group (TEG) on data for MSP.

26. The Steering Group suggested that the BSR MSP Data ESG will act as liaison with the EU TEG in relation to MSP data. The HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG will be informed about policy related aspects.

Planners´ Forum and identification of project ideas

27. The Steering Group noted the results of the latest MSP Planners' Forum meeting and planning of the next event (document 6-2 and presentation).

28. The Steering Group discussed an opportunity to arrange next Planner's Forum as physical meeting and invited the PA coordinators to investigate potential opportunities.

29. The Steering Group noted the information on the HORIZON call and in general supported the proposal to join the call (document 6-4) and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to develop the living lab proposal further, ensuring that it caters to key regional needs.

Follow-up and progress of regional projects and/or initiatives – outputs of high regional significance

30. The Steering Group noted the general progress of the SEABAS project platform (document 5-4), including the plans on an international event to be organized in collaboration with Espoo Convention and Finland in Helsinki on 5-6 April 2027, back-to-back with the planned spring Steering Group of the Working Group. The Steering Group also noted additional information from Finland on the plan to have a high-level event with the Espoo Convention, which will be very relevant for the members of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

31. The Steering Group noted the updated information and the four worked case study examples demonstrating application of BALM tool (document 5-7). The Steering Group also recalled additional deliverables from PROTECT BALTIC related to ecosystem services and welcomed the proposal from the HELCOM Secretariat to submit a document to IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 10-2027.

32. The Steering Group noted the developments of the Baltic PlaNet project platform supporting coastal planners and MSP authorities to take into account extreme weather events and climate change. The project, that capitalizes the results of multiple projects, organized a workshop to understand the data needs and how climate indicators could be visualized in the Sea2Land Navigator. The project has also organized workshops to foster multilevel coastal spatial planning cooperation in Estonia, Latvia, and is organizing a third one in Poland. The Steering Group further noted that Baltic PlaNet has close collaboration with the SEABAS platform.

33. The Steering Group noted the information on the ongoing work under NESBp project on multi-use (document 3-3), especially noting the upcoming second Community of Practice Workshop "Adaptive Governance for Multi-use at Sea" on 24 November 2026.

34. The Steering Group noted that the NESBp project has also organized a workshop in June 2026 in the EU MSP Week on sharing information of the EBA Guidelines and that there was an additional workshop organized on 19 October 2026 focussing on North Sea discussions.

35. The Steering Group welcomed the provisional invitation of the group members to the NESBp project final event on 21-22 April 2027.

36. The Steering Group noted the information from the WATERWAYS project available in the document 5-11 and presented by an invited guest from the Finnish Meteorological Institute, representing this project.

37. The Steering Group noted the clarification that the methods developed by the project can be replicated to other areas, with the aim to find solutions when AIS data is not available due to different reasons.

38. The Steering Group noted the view from Finland welcoming the work done by the project since aspects such as multi-use with offshore windfarms as well as winter navigation are important

elements for Finland, and the WATERWAYS project can produce planning evidence to support MSP.

39. The Steering Group welcomed the proposal to keep the group updated on the results of the project and synergies with MSP processes, noting that the next Steering Group of the group is planned to be held in Helsinki, and representative(s) from the WATERWAYS project could be invited to further discuss relevant aspects with the group.

Any other issues related to the work of the Steering Group

40. The Steering Group recommended to organize the next Steering Group as an integral part of IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 10-2026.