



LIFE Nature project “Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea”
Reference number: LIFE 05 NAT/LV/000100

Executive summary: **Action A6– Elaboration of National GIS Database / digital maps** **Action leader P1, Baltic Environmental Forum – Estonia**

Goal of action:

- to create a national GIS database in each Baltic country about project areas containing background data (depth, coastline etc.), data from inventory and other actions that can be processed in GIS;
- to generate secondary data, maps according to the needs of other project activities (threat assessments, developing management plans, protection rules, presenting project results);
- to fill in Natura 2000 data forms based on data gathered by the project.

Activities implemented:

- Development of the concept of GIS action;
- Harmonization of data collection and databases in all 3 countries: Development of the common database structure and a format for inserting data for all 3 Baltic States;
- Gathering background data (bathymetry, economic activities etc.) needed for producing maps for management plans, threat assessments, stakeholder communication;
- Inserting data from inventory and other project actions into national databases;
- Producing maps for stakeholder communication, management plans and final project reporting;
- Providing info for national Natura 2000 databases or filling in Natura 2000 data forms based on data gathered by the project;
- Handing the project data over to national competent authorities.

3 meetings of GIS experts were held (2 of them together with management plan experts) and GIS issues were discussed also in the project partners meetings.

Results achieved:

- Valuable work on harmonization of data collection and databases between 3 Baltic countries has been done;
- Data from inventories and other project actions have been inserted into national databases and handed over to the national competent authorities (Baltic Ministries of Environment and their subordinated institutions);
- Natura 2000 data forms filled/info for national Natura 2000 databases provided;
- Necessary maps for stakeholder communication, management plans and presentation of project results produced.

Main lessons learned:

- GIS activity is a supporting action for other project actions;
- It takes a lot of time and efforts to harmonize data collection and database structure in 3 countries where different institutions and authorities are using different GIS programmes and database structures. However, harmonization is worth efforts because it enables creation of joint maps or joint databases and comparison of data/results if needed.
- The main difficulty in this project was related to the frequent changes of GIS experts in Latvia and Lithuania.