



LIFE Nature project “Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea”  
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## **Executive summary: Development of management plan concept for MPAs and elaboration of management plans and individual protection proposals for selected project sites**

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A7 action was the central activity of the project - it integrated results of the inventory actions as well as threat assessments and applied them for designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and management plan development.

The **main goals** of the action were to develop concept of management planning of MPAs and to prepare pilot management plans in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Furthermore it included also designation of new MPAs to contribute to the marine Natura 2000 network in the territorial waters of the Baltic States.

The concept development for management planning of MPAs included study of background materials - national experience and legislation in management planning of protected areas, international experience and available guidelines (e.g. EC and HELCOM) as well as conceptual discussions and experience exchange at project partners meetings and international events. As result a concept paper was prepared followed by system for evaluation of species and habitats of Community and national importance. These documents served as a basis for elaboration of the management plans by the project partners.

In each country two sites were selected as pilot areas for management plan development - Väinameri and West-Saaremaa (Küdema) in Estonia, Western Coast of the Gulf of Riga and Nida-Pērkone in Latvia and Palanga and Neringa in Lithuania. Management plan development in each country followed the official national procedures, at the same time involving permanent experience exchange and co-ordination between the countries facilitated by the partners meeting as well as particular expert meetings of A7 action. Management plan development was accompanied by intensive stakeholder dialogue in order to explain the marine nature values and necessary conservation measures and to find solutions with regard to economic interests within the proposed or existing Marine Protected Areas. All management plans are submitted to national competent authorities and approval is expected at the nearest time.

Based on information gained from inventory actions within the project territories the proposals for designation of marine Natura 2000 sites or changes of boundaries were developed in Latvia and Lithuania. This included 7 new sites in Latvia (3 SPAs; 2 pSCIs and 2 combined sites) and 1 new SPA and proposals for border changes of 2 existing pSCIs in Lithuania. The proposals are approved by the competent authorities, except proposal for minor border change of one Lithuanian site, which was mainly related to administrative aspects and not significant for ensuring the favourable conservation status of the nature values of EU importance.

Results of the action have provided major input for establishment of marine Natura 2000 network within the territorial waters of the Baltic States. Countries have gained valuable experience and basis for further management planning as well as proposals for conservation measures to protect marine nature values.