



## “Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea”

LIFE Project Number: LIFE05 NAT/LV/000100

### INTERIM REPORT: TECHNICAL REPORT



MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT



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FINLAND

**LIFE05 NAT/LV/000100**  
**TECHNICAL INTERIM REPORT**  
***Covering the project activities from 01.08.2005 to 28.02.2007***

Reporting Date

**31/05/2007**

LIFE PROJECT NAME

**Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea**

Data Project

<b>Project location</b>	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (Russia)
<b>Project start date:</b>	01/08/2005
<b>Project end date:</b>	31/07/2009
<b>Total Project duration (in months)</b>	48 months
<b>Total budget</b>	3,111,316 €
<b>EC contribution:</b>	1,555,688 €
<b>(%) of total costs</b>	50%
<b>(%) of eligible costs</b>	50.36%

Data Beneficiary

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## 1. LIST (I) KEY-WORDS AND (II) ABBREVIATIONS

In the following partner names and identification numbers as well as project area codes are listed:

### Partners:

- P1: Baltic Environmental Forum - Estonia (BEF-Estonia) - *Estonia*  
P2: Baltic Environmental Forum - Lithuania (BEF-Lithuania) - *Lithuania*  
P3: Estonian Environment Information Centre (EEIC) – *Estonia*  
P4: Estonian Marine Institute (EMI) – *Estonia*  
P5: Estonian Ornithological Society (EOÜ) - *Estonia*  
P6: Marine and Inland Waters Administration (MIWA) –*Latvia*  
P7: Latvian National Armed Forces (NAF) - *Latvia*  
\*P8: Institute for Aquatic Ecology of Latvia (IAEL) – *Latvia*  
P9: Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB) – *Latvia*  
P10: Latvian Fish Resources Agency (LATFRA) – *Latvia*  
P11: SIA Vides Filmu Studija /Wildlife & Environmental Film Productions / (VFS)  
P12: SO Sociāli Orientētu Projektu Aģentūra /PO Socially Oriented Project Agency/ (SOPA) - *Latvia*  
P13: Institute of Ecology, Vilnius University (EKOI) – *Lithuania*  
P14: Coastal Research and Planning Institute, Klaipėda University (KUCORPI) – *Lithuania*  
P15: Centre of Marine Research (CMR) – *Lithuania*  
P16: PO Baltic Fund for Nature (BFFN-RU) – *St.Petersburg, Russia*  
P17: BirdLife International  
\*\*P18: Estonian State Nature Conservation Centre (ESNCC)- *Estonia*  
P19: Metsähallitus - Natural Heritage Services (Metsähallitus) – *Finland*  
\*\*\*P20: Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) – *Germany*

*\* legal status of the partner P8 has changed, partner became independent agency*

*\*\* legal status of partner P18 has changed, partner was absorbed by new national roof organisation, which took over partnership in the LIFE project as legal entity*

*\*\*\* new partner as change from co-financer to partner*

The above-mentioned changes were accepted by the European Commission on 14 February, 2007

### Project areas:

- 1EST: East Gulf of Finland  
2EST: West Gulf of Finland  
3EST: Väinameri  
4EST: West Saaremaa  
5EST: South Saaremaa  
6EST: Irbe Strait  
7LAT: Ainaži-Tūja  
8LAT: West Coast of Gulf of Riga  
9LAT: Irbe Strait  
10LAT: Akmeņrags - Pāvilosta  
11LAT: Nida - Pērkone  
12LIT: Palanga  
13LIT: Neringa

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **project objectives** as defined in the grant contract (Section C) are the following:

1. Complete the establishment of Natura 2000 in the marine territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (site selection, designation, protection, and management);
2. Assess and reduce the impact of fishery by-catch on target bird and mammal species;
3. Assess and address other threats to marine Natura 2000 sites (e.g., caused by construction/development, disturbance of species by economic or recreational activities, pollution);
4. Increase public and stakeholder awareness on Natura 2000, marine protected areas and biodiversity in general in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia;
5. Promote transboundary networking and capacity building on marine protected areas between the Baltic States, other EU Member States and Russia.

The list of **key deliverables** and outputs as defined in the grant contract, (Section C) is indicated below. It contains those deliverables scheduled until the date of reporting on activities (28 February 07) and indicated the one's which have been delayed or fulfilled earlier than originally planned.

Deliverable or Milestone	Number of the associated action	Deadline	✓
Project management structure established	F.1; F.2, F.3	2005.10.01	✓
Project website established to promote transboundary networking and establish project communication platform	E.2	2005.11.01	✓
Methodology, related to the inventories of species/habitats, harmonized	A.2; A.3; A.4; A.5	2006.01.01	✓
Production and distribution of 2 information flyers for stakeholders and fishermen	E.1	2006.01.01 <i>2nd flyer printed</i>	✓
All partners and staff trained for their tasks	A.1	2006.06.01	✓
Concept for Management Plans developed	A.7	2006.06.01	✓
Alternative fishing gear provided to fishermen	D.1	2006.12.01 <i>Achieved: spring 06</i>	✓
Sites for management plans selected	A.7	2007.04.01 <i>Achieved: spring 06</i>	✓

In comparison to the 1<sup>st</sup> progress report (30.06.2006) no additional deliverables have been finalised (according to the project plan no new deliverables were due). The delayed 2<sup>nd</sup> leaflet for fishermen has been printed based on first experiences from the earlier started D.1 action (alternative fishing gear has been successfully introduced much earlier than planned and could be introduced in the flyer).

### Summary of Project Framework

The project is successfully led by the applicant, Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia and implemented in excellent cooperation with 20 highly motivated partners from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (the core partners) as well as from Russia, Finland, Germany and BirdLife International. Due to administrative reforms and re-organisation several partners and co-financers in Estonia and Latvia have either changed legal entity form or shifted the co-financing to new budget schemes. Furthermore the original co-financer BfN Germany became a partner as being involved in the technical implementation of a project measure. Those changes have been accepted by the European Commission and contract has been modified on 14 February, 2007.

### Summary of Project progress

- A. A1, Training & education of project staff, is nearly completed, only a study visit of the project partners to Russian sites still to come as part of capacity building measures of Russian partners (receiving feedback from Baltic experts and showing some of their sites in exchange).

The inventory actions (A2 – A5) are on the peak of implementation being in the middle of the second field year; all methods are discussed and harmonised among partners, frequent exchange among the experts from the different countries guarantees continuous cooperation.

- A6 - GIS data base concept is developed, agreed and first data sets are being tested. A7 (management plans (MP) for selected sites) – concept is developed, country specific particularities are elaborated, solution for possible shortcomings found and plans under preparation in coordination with A2 – A5 field investigations and C1 – C4 threat assessment and D1 management activities. A7 is the central action of the project with its MP development and protection regime definition at project sites. The other actions are strongly linked to it.
- B. No “B” actions are defined in the project.
- C. C1 - by-catch assessment - started with data collection although bad weather conditions and the bird flue hampered the activities in Latvia and Lithuania. Good cooperation with fishermen has been established and bird/seal by-catch is recorded satisfactorily – no trends or conclusions on the threat are yet possible, the next field season will be essential.  
C2 - modelling of dumping and dredging has started with methodological discussions and testing of data sets ahead the schedule to support A7 action with threat information;  
C3 - disturbance analysis - not yet started, but will, according to schedule, start in autumn 2007.  
C4 - pollution assessment - methods agreed, data collection and first laboratory assessments implemented for some sites back to back with A2 field investigations;
- D. The “D1” action becomes one of the “flag ship” activities of the project with its testing and promotion of alternative fishing methods and is getting famous in Estonia and Lithuania; even in Latvia, where the measure was not planned to be implemented, the fishermen started to be involved and the fishing gear is being tested there as well.
- E. Project info flyers (E1) were printed and distributed, web site (E2) is launched ([www.balticseaportal.net](http://www.balticseaportal.net)) and is continuously filled; The film concept (E3) is ready and filming activities are ongoing accompanying the project actions; Media (E4) is getting informed about the main activities; E5 – E10 are scheduled for later project stage, except the preparation of one of the project conferences (E8), which has started recently.
- F. Project management scheme proves being well-designed and functional - continuous financial supervision of partners is ongoing; partners participate actively in decision making; steering group is advising and supporting well – so far no project management problems encountered.

### Summary of Conclusions

The project is progressing well - no obvious signs that the objectives could not be reached. First preliminary results of inventory actions have brought up information on new breeding colonies of Annex I birds in Estonia and a new habitat (moraine ridges) in Lithuania! Ringed seals are obviously more endangered than thought, while some fish species are more vital than known before.

By its nature, aiming at a set of management plans for marine protected areas, the project is contributing to socio-economic development in the coastal zone of the Baltic States and also includes sustainable actions beyond the project within the management plans. Stakeholder involvement at early MP development stage has started and is appreciated by the key actors.

With regard to other EU policies and the integration of impact of Natura 2000 issues on/from them, the project noted 2 fields for additional activities by expert seminars with international exchange: EIA in Marine territories to face infrastructure development (especially wind parks on not yet designated sandbanks); second issue is the interlink between Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Strategy, which list different requirements for the areas of concern and need to be viewed and analysed.

### Summary of Comments on Finances

The consolidated expenditure report shows that the target of 150% of Commission's first rate was reached already by 28 February 2007. Consequently the interim report was prepared ahead the schedule. In general, the budget is fitting well, no major constraints are observed, although feedback from the EC might bring different experience. The project manager has made a detailed planning of foreseen costs for the second half of the project and assumes that no major contract modification due to over- or under-spending of a budget position must be made. However, the budget should be revised in its positions (within the 10% threshold) to help reaching the objectives. Few positions must be exchanged against each other across the partners to place them correctly, according to the changed circumstances some technical specifications should be changed and some additional cost positions introduced to close gaps in exchange with some other costs, which can be reduced. A proposal for budget revision is explained in the interim report and the project seeks acceptance from the European Commission for it.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### Background, problem and objectives

The project will contribute to the overall objective of protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the Eastern Baltic Sea. In this context establishment of the Marine Natura 2000 sites in the coastal and offshore waters of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is the key instrument to reach the objective and therefore the main goal of the LIFE project. Ecosystem protection is going across national borders and therefore the integration of Russian stakeholders also is a small goal of the project in view of transboundary ecosystem protection.

Due to very little information available on distribution and abundance of different marine species and habitats, there is a lack of effective protection of marine areas. Consequently there is also a lack of methodological expertise concerning selection, protection, management and monitoring of marine protected areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea.

Although the possible threats and their impact on the conservation status of marine species and habitats are not sufficiently analysed it is obvious that the undesired by-catch of birds and seals in fishing nets is probably a major problem for the populations. Another serious threat is physical destruction of habitats by construction and dumping of dredged material. Hazardous substances in our waters lead to further destruction of vulnerable species and habitats. And, at last it is important to mention the increasing shipping transport, infrastructure development as well as growing recreational activities, which are potential threats to sites and species.

The project has defined 13 sites along the coast of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (see Annex 1: Project map) as its "project areas" – they are either extensions of nominated sites (aimed at revision of boundaries), larger complexes of small nominated sites or sites potentially to be nominated (Latvia). Additionally the project has a partner from Russia to raise capacity among experts and replicate the activities later on in Russian waters (outside the current project).

At these project areas inventories of the following species and habitats are performed: **Waterbirds** such as: Steller's Eider, Black-throated Diver, Red-throated Diver, Goosander, Velvet Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Goldeneye, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Little Gull, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan and Barnacle Goose; **Marine mammals** such as Grey & Ringed Seals and Harbour Porpoise; **Fish species** such as Twaite Shad, Spined Loach and Bullhead, **Habitats** such as Sandbanks, Mudflats, Coastal Lagoons, Large Shallow Inlets and Bays and Reefs (see Annex 2: List of species and habitats investigated)

The project acts in the socio-economic context of coastal zone development and the cross-cutting between conservation of nature values, economic growth by infrastructure/recreation activity development and keeping traditional lifestyle – e.g. subsistence fishery - as integer part of coastal life. Integration of stakeholders at early stage into management plan development shall guarantee acceptance of nature protection measures and motivation for later participation in management activities to establish sustainable inter-relations between the society actors and economic interests.

#### Expected results

The project will result in Natura 2000 site designation for most of marine areas of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in their territorial waters. Detailed knowledge on species/habitats and understanding of threats to marine Natura 2000 sites in the Baltic States will lead to a series of well-prepared management plans for selected sites – criteria for species/habitats conservation status assessment are a part of the management plan. As the main results of the project will be the prepared management plans and no implementation of the management measures, no changes in quantity and quality of species/habitats will be possible to be noted as immediate result.

Alternative measures to reduce fishery by-catch of protected species will have been tested, promoted and a large number of fishermen will have started to implement them and note substantial reduction of by-catch (50%) from their gear – consequently acceptance of nature conservation targets will have grown among this stakeholder group.

At the end of the project increased capacity and awareness of a large amount of experts, stakeholders and the general public on all aspects of conservation of marine Natura 2000 sites will have been achieved in the three Baltic States and an added value for Natura 2000 implementation in marine areas in the whole EU will have been gained. In addition the cooperation with Russian experts and stakeholders will have been strengthened and lead to further eco-system protection in the whole Eastern Baltic Sea region.

## 4. LIFE-PROJECT FRAMEWORK

### Working method and project actions

#### The project will:

Carry out inventories of marine species and habitats according to the Habitats and Birds Directives; where necessary will make a proposal for delineation or adjustment of borders of marine SPAs or pSCIs, contribute to the designation of new marine Natura 2000 sites;

Assess the impact of fishery by-catch, construction and dumping activities, disturbance and pollution on target species and habitats;

Prepare 6-7 management plans for selected areas and provide general recommendations for protection and management of marine Natura 2000 sites;

Carry out pilot management activity: testing and promotion of alternative fishing methods and gear in order to reduce by-catch of birds and mammals of Community interest; facilitate a network of fishermen and nature conservationists; and

Contribute to raising the capacity of stakeholders to implement Natura 2000 network in marine environment and to increase the awareness of concerned stakeholders as well as general public (by initiating workshops, public events and information in media).

#### The sub-actions are defined as follows:

A.1 Training of project staff	C.1 By-catch Assessment	E.3 Project Film	F.1 Project Steering Group
A.2 Benthos inventory	C.2 Dumping assessment	E.4 Media work	F.2 Project administration
A.3 Waterbird inventory	C.3 Disturbance Assess.	E.5 Information tables	F.3 Management Board
A.4 Mammal inventory	C.4 Pollution Assessment	E.6 Book	F.4 Country Co-ordination
A.5 Fish inventory	D.1 Alternative fishing	E.7 Public events	F.5 Project Monitoring
A.6 Elaboration of GIS	E.1 Information flyers	E.8 Experience exchange	F.6 Audit
A.7 Management plans	E.2 Project website	E.9 Layman's report	F.7 After LIFE Cons. Plan
		E.10 Final presentation	

The project activities are implemented synchronically in the three Baltic States based on harmonised methods and according to a joint planning schedule (see Annex 3: Project schedule).

### Beneficiary, partners and project-organisation

The project is led by the applicant, Baltic Environmental Forum – Latvia and implemented in cooperation with 20 partners: from **Estonia** (Baltic Environmental Forum – Estonia, Environmental Information Centre, Marine Institute, Ornithological Society, State Nature Conservation Centre), **Latvia** (Marine and Inland Waters Administration, National Armed Forces, Institute of Aquatic Ecology, Ornithological Society, Fish Resources Agency, Wildlife and Environmental Film Productions, Socially Oriented Project Agency), and **Lithuania** (Baltic Environmental Forum – Lithuania, Institute of Ecology, Coastal Research and Planning Institute, Centre of Marine Research), as well as **international partners** (Baltic Fund for Nature of St. Petersburg Naturalists Society, Birdlife International, Metsähallitus – Finland, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation – Germany) (see Annex 4: Partners' data list).

The project management is organised on four levels: i) financial project administration bilaterally: project leader and individual partner; ii) decision making in consensus among all partners in partners' meetings lead by beneficiary; iii) action implementation in cross-country teams lead by one of the partners; and iv) management plan development, although with harmonised cross-country methodology, in national settings led by BEF offices. Russian partner is participating in most actions to learn from Baltic experts, international partners are giving input to some actions (see Annex 6: Russian partner's involvement).

### Modifications according to initial proposal

Until now one modification of the contract has been made: due to administrative reforms and re-organisation some partners in Estonia (P18) and Latvia (P8) have changed the legal entity form. Some co-financers shifted the co-financing to new budget schemes (from Latvian Environmental Fund to Latvian Ministry of Environment and from Estonian Ministry of Environment to Environmental Investment Centre and State Nature Conservation Centre - P18). Furthermore the original co-financer BfN Germany became a partner as being involved in the technical implementation of a project measure. Those changes have been accepted by the European Commission and contract has been modified on 14 February, 2007.



## 5. PROGRESS, RESULTS

### A Preparatory actions/management plan preparation

#### A.1. Raising Capacity of project staff for project implementation

Action leader: Heidrun Fammner, Baltic Environmental Forum – Latvia (Ben)

(see Annex 5.1.1. for detailed action report)

##### Conducted activities and resulting outputs

Action A1 was meant to provide training and inspiration for the project team to undertake the inventories and also to view marine protected areas as a holistic concept.

For this purpose a **training course on methodology of habitat mapping** was organised at the Finnish partner Metsähallitus: three experts from P4, P8 and P14 carrying out the habitat inventory were accompanying the Finnish experts for one week (19-23 September, 2005) at habitat mapping activities and learnt about underwater video and scuba diving for inventories, about advantages and limitations of different methods and about data analysis – interpretation and intercalibration.

The bird inventory team had two trainings: **The training course on bird counting from ships** (21-25 November, in Latvia) was performed by experts from Partner P17, Birdlife International. In total 11 trainees participated. **The training on aerial survey techniques** (3-5 May 2006, in Estonia) was conducted by a Dutch expert and two senior experts of P5, and 8 trainees were trained.

Besides Baltic partners, also experts from the Russian partner P16 were participating in the bird survey training courses.

Another training element was a **study visit to Germany** to the Agency for Nature Conservation (P20) at its location on the island *Vilm* (13-17 March, 2006). The host provided in-house experts from its department as well as external experts being involved in the German sites designation. The study visit lasted for five days and contained an intensive seminar and two excursions. 17 participants from nearly all Baltic and Russian partner organizations participated in the study visit.

One more study visit was organised although having been deleted from the LIFE project and budget, but as it was strongly linked to the LIFE project it shall be described here as “accompanying activity”: a **visit to the Netherlands** was organised in May 2006 for one week and several seminars and excursions to marine and coastal sites were organised; 30 participants from the Baltic MPAs LIFE project partners and Baltic States’ competent authorities were participating in the study visit.

##### Received reactions/feed-back

The training, both for habitat as well as for bird inventories, was attested by the participants as excellent quality and high importance for the project. The feedback from participants of study trips was also very positive: they evaluated the trips as successful and useful.

##### List of deliverables

Reports from trainings and Germany study visit. (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report, Annex 2: A1)

##### Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered

All activities were implemented according to the planned schedule and fulfilled the set goals, so no major problems or drawbacks were encountered.

##### Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.

It is still planned to organise a **study visit of project partners to Russian marine protected areas** (5 days, in spring 2008) to exchange experience on marine biodiversity values, their protection and solving/avoiding conflicts with economic interests, to visit (potential) marine protected areas in the Eastern Gulf of Finland, and to discuss possibilities for further co-operation.

## **A.2. Benthic Habitat Inventory**

Action leader: Georg Martin, Estonian Marine Institute (P4)

(see Annex 5.1.2. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

#### **Activity 1. Screening the existing information on the project areas**

During October 2005 - April 2006 all existing information on the project areas was compiled from several sources. Based on this, the proposals for actual fieldwork activities were elaborated. Activity is completed.

#### **Activity 2. Selecting exact survey sites (potential target habitats), defining the grid of sampling stations and harmonizing of exact methodology**

This activity was based on series of meetings aimed at discussing specific aspects of the work. During the reporting period, three workshops have been held and one is planned for May 2007.

The 1<sup>st</sup> workshop "Baltic LIFE Marine Habitat Seminar" was held on 14-15.11.2005, in Tallinn. The goal was to start methodological discussions on benthic habitat inventories (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report, Annex 2: A2).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop "Baltic LIFE Marine Habitat Seminar" was held on 24-28.05.2006, in Saaremaa, Estonia. The main aim of the workshop was to agree and inter-calibrate practical mapping techniques to be used in the fieldworks during the habitat inventories in 2006 and 2007 (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A2).

The workshop on "Methodology of underwater video analysis for habitat mapping" was held on 09-12.11.2006 in Klaipeda, Lithuania to harmonise approach of the habitat classification and the methodology of underwater video analysis for mapping of benthic habitats (see Annex 5.1.2.).

#### **Activity 3. Field inventory / sampling**

This activity is planned for two field seasons and should cover all project areas.

In **Estonian** coastal waters during the field season of 2006 the total area covered by mapping activities was approximately 2500 km<sup>2</sup>. In total 373 locations were sampled by means of UW video recording, grab sampling and SCUBA diving covering two project areas completely and one project area partly. Remaining areas will be sampled during 2007.

In **Latvian** project areas 9 LAT and 11 LAT video data from 846 stations and 118 benthos samples were collected during summer 2006. Currently processing of sampling data is going on and will be finalized by the beginning of May 2007. The preliminary map of marine habitats in project areas 9 LAT and 11 LAT shall be presented in Klaipeda meeting on 14-16 May 2007.

In **Lithuanian** waters the area investigated in 2006 comprises approximately 130 km<sup>2</sup>. This makes nearly half of sites planned to be covered by sampling under project field activities. Total of 150 quantitative samples were taken by means of SCUBA diving and grabs in addition to approximately 120 transects recorded by remote underwater video system. Analysis of video material was completed in February 2007 and database of results was compiled. Analysis of quantitative samples was started in autumn 2006 and will be completed by May 2007.

This Action is still ongoing: field inventory and sampling will be finalised by November 2007.

#### **Activity 4. Laboratory treatment of samples**

This activity is currently in progress. Samples collected during the field investigations in 2006 are processed and digitised using the same methodology in three laboratories.

#### **Activity 5. Analysis of results and reporting.**

Analyses of the results of fieldwork and data processing for project areas sampled in 2006 will be finalised by the end of 2007. Currently this activity is in the progress. The inventories have given a lot of new information, especially in Latvia where no extensive work on marine areas has been done before. For Estonia several areas were described for the first time and for the first time such large collection of video material was obtained. In Lithuania a new habitat for the Baltic Sea was discovered - moraine ridges, which are remnants from glacial period. It is planned to introduce and discuss this new habitat in the international workshop "Features and interpretation of Natura 2000 marine habitats in the Baltic countries" that will take place in May 2007 in Lithuania.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

No reactions and feedbacks received so far as fieldwork results have not been published yet.

### **List of deliverables**

Reports from workshops and guidelines for analysis of video materials (see Annex 5.1.2.).

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

No major problems/drawbacks have been encountered so far.

### **Planned activities and reports to be expected until the end date of the project.**

The planned activities include: workshop "Features and interpretation of Natura 2000 marine habitats in the Baltic countries" in Klaipeda on 14-16 May 2007 with the aim of finalising the habitat classification system; Finalizing fieldwork in remaining pilot areas by November 2007; Processing of data collected from fieldwork by the end of 2008; Final action report by beginning of 2009.

## **A.3. Waterbird inventory**

*Action leader: Mindaugas Dagys, Institute of Ecology, Lithuania (P13)*

(see Annex 5.1.3. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The waterbird inventory started in November 2005, according to schedule. At present it is in progress.

#### **Methodological meetings and trainings**

At first, methodology for water bird surveys from ships has been prepared, discussed and tested during the methodological meeting in Riga and onboard the ship Varonis in November 2005. Methodology for waterbird surveys from the coast has also been agreed upon in November 2005. Training on aerial bird surveys took place on 3–5 May, in Pärnu (Estonia). Thus, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and Russian teams were successfully prepared for ship, aerial and coastal surveys (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A1).

The methodology of waterbird surveys was further discussed and evaluated in February 2007 in Riga. Issues related to the further data treatment and analysis were also preliminary discussed (see Annex 5.1.3.).

#### **Fieldworks**

In both **Lithuanian** project areas regular coastal counts have been carried out throughout the reporting period (in November – April wintering seasons). In January 2006 coastal mid-winter counts were carried out (simultaneously in all three countries). Migrating Little Gull counts (coastal counts combined with ship surveys) were carried out in Lithuania in summer 2006. Preliminary results indicate that both project sites are used by a substantial number of migrating Little Gulls and Common Terns who are concentrated along the coast (within several kilometres from it).

In **Latvia**, midwinter coastal water bird counts were performed in January 2006 and 2007. The latter was supplemented with aerial surveys. Four ship surveys have been carried out so far from the Navy ship of P7. Unfortunately, the last two counts did not cover all the project sites due to stormy weather and ship availability problems. In August 2006 and January 2007 Latvian team was joined by Estonian observers and joint survey of the Irbe Strait transboundary area was performed. In addition, aerial survey of Goldeneyes was carried out in July 2007.

Midwinter waterbird surveys were performed in all **Estonian** project sites in January 2006 (coastal counts) and January – February 2007 (aerial counts). Two special swan surveys were performed– aerial survey in spring and coastal survey in autumn 2006. Breeding bird survey carried out in spring 2006 in South Saaremaa, yielded very interesting results – many new breeding colonies of Birds Directive Annex I species were discovered. Moulting waterbirds were surveyed in summer 2006. Coastal counts of migratory and wintering birds were carried out regularly since summer 2006. Transboundary site Irbe Strait was surveyed together with Latvians in August 2006 and January 2007.

Due to atypical weather conditions in the second wintering and migration season, an additional fieldwork season is needed in order to ensure collection of reliable data. Extending the fieldwork period until April 2008 would not affect other project activities or require any additional financial resources.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

No feed-back has been received yet, as action is still ongoing.

### **List of deliverables**

No deliverables for this action have been produced or foreseen apart from the drafted methodology for ship surveys, which is an internal document, used by the national waterbird inventory teams.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

The major problems in the implementation of this action are related to poor weather conditions, hampering the surveys. The second problematic issue is the availability of suitable ships (in Latvia and Lithuania). No major problems of drawbacks have been identified regarding the selected methodology.

### **Planned activities and reports to be expected until the end date of the project.**

**The collection of field data, i.e. water bird surveys** will continue until April 2008.

**Analysis of the collected data** will start already in summer 2007, while final results of the birds inventory, including the identified most important areas for water birds, will be available in early 2008.

## **A.4. Marine Mammal Inventory**

*Action leader: Ivar Jüssi, Estonian Nature Conservation Centre (P18)*

(see Annex 5.1.4. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

#### **A4.1 Inventory of Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)**

During the preparatory phase (October 2005 - February 2006) nautical charts and bathymetry databases of project areas were studied for selection of exact study stations. Different sets of arrays were designed for different areas. A few porpoise detectors' deployment systems were built and tested in field conditions. Test fieldworks with borrowed porpoise detectors were carried out in May, June and August 2006. Data from test runs were analysed together with experienced colleagues from German Oceanographic Museum. During the tests the final design of buoy stations and deployment/recovering technique was developed. Negotiations on purchase of the equipment started in spring 2006. It was decided to postpone the purchase to the beginning of 2007 when the new model of porpoise detector (T-POD ver. 5) was planned to be issued.

#### **A4.2 Grey seal (*Halichoerys grypus*) survey**

During the preparatory phase (October 2005 – March 2006) the concept for selection of survey sites and timing of tagging was developed and telemetry devices were selected. Instead of initially planned satellite-linked time-depth recorders it was decided to use GPS-GSM tags that provide much better accuracy. A study visit to Sea Mammal Research Unit, UK took place in August 2006 to negotiate technical conditions of the Grey seal telemetry equipment. 10 telemetry units will be delivered by the end of May 2007 and deployed in summer 2007.

#### **A4.3 Ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*) survey**

In preparatory periods of the survey (January – March 2006 and February – March 2007) development of sea ice was followed using satellite imagery and public ice forecasts. In April 2006 four observation flights were made to the Gulf of Riga. Altogether 20 flight hours were used to cover approximately 2376 kilometres of observation transects. Three persons were trained as observers in aerial surveys.

Population size of ringed seals in the Gulf of Riga was estimated to be ca. 1475 individuals (+/- 30%), which is almost the same as 10 years ago. That means that there has been either very low reproduction or some extra mortality during these years, otherwise this number should be much bigger.

In January 2007 training on seal census method was carried out for the Russian Partner (P16).

In February 2007 several tests of improved aerial census technique were carried out.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

No reactions and feedbacks have been received so far as fieldwork results are not yet available.

### **List of deliverables**

Due to the early stage of work, no deliverables are available yet.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

Two major problems that caused delays in project implementation were related to the reorganization of P18 and the temporal lack of financial resources in 2006 caused by change of co-financer. Both problems are solved and activity is catching up.

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

All three activities of A4 are planned to be finished by November 2008.

Ringed seal surveys are planned for March 2007 (study of breeding areas) and April 2008 (full scale survey). Data will be analyzed and total population abundance will be calculated by end of May 2008, main distribution maps will be produced and key areas for ringed seals described by fall 2008.

Harbour porpoise acoustic study will be launched in May 2007 after purchasing porpoise detectors. The study is planned to be finished in November 2008. Final report is expected in December 2008.

The Grey seal telemetry survey will start in June 2007 with deployment of recorders. It is planned to establish a special link to the project web page, so that the wider public can follow the location of seals. The devices should work until May 2008. After that the data will be analysed and final results produced by the end of October 2008.

## **A.5. Fish Community Inventory**

*Action leader: Markus Vetemaa, Estonian Marine Institute (P4)*

(see Annex 5.1.5. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The aim of the Action A5 is to gain comprehensive and detailed information about the existence and abundance of fish species from Annex II of the Habitats Directive (HD) in the project areas. Besides HD Annex II species, the action targets also other rare and protected species (e.g. listed in national Red Data Books of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), which might need more attention in the future.

The action consists of following two main steps: 1) Collection and analysis of existing data (finished in May 2006), and 2) Field investigations. According to work plan field investigations employ three different methods:

- 1) Gill net fishing using a large variety of mesh sizes.
- 2) Hand seining in very shallow coastal areas. This method targets small-size species (not entangling into gill nets) and also young-of-year of the larger species.
- 3) Food analysis during regular commercial fish monitoring in order to obtain data on small-sized species.

During the methodological meeting in Saaremaa, October 2005 (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A5) the joint methodology was developed, suiting to all three countries and making the results comparable. During the duration of the project in all 13 study areas field works according to the agreed methods will be carried out at least twice: in cold and warm water period. Work plan foresees activities in altogether 26 study sites.

Work plan has been implemented slightly faster than planned, because after the first study season more than 50% of activities have been carried out. So, it is likely that some more areas can be included.

The results got so far are in rather good accordance with the starting hypotheses about the existence and abundance of the target species. However, somewhat surprising has been the high occurrence of Annex II species *Cottus gobio* (4 EST and 5EST) and *Cobitis taenia* (3 EST) in marine areas. This means that besides freshwater populations Estonia has also strong and healthy marine (= brackish water) populations of these species. Since the hand seining method has been especially successful (77% of areas covered after the first season), species lists are attached to present report (see Annex 5.1.5.)

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

In meetings with the environmental specialists the presented results have received interest and got positive feedback. Also, fishermen have been interested in the results, since these may impact their activities.

### **List of deliverables**

The main outcome of action A5 until today is the raw data stored in the databases of the partner institutions.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

In Estonia and Lithuania there have been no drawbacks and more than 50% of sites have been covered. In Latvia the share of areas covered is lower because the distribution of funds for field works was impacted due to the reorganisation of P10. However, all the problems have been solved and therefore it is expected that the data collection in Latvia will be finished according to project plan.

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

Further work plan includes continuing of the fieldworks and analysis of the results. According to the work plan the action A5 needs to be finalized by early 2008. After that it must be possible to use the collected information in aim to elaborate the management plans of the project areas. Recent situation of the work allows being optimistic, no major drawbacks can be foreseen.

## **A.6. Elaboration of National GIS Database / Digital Maps**

*Action leader: Merle Kuris, Baltic Environmental forum Estonia (P1)*

(see Annex 5.1.6. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

So far mainly preparatory actions have taken place to develop GIS database: meetings, concept development, a common database structure and data entry formats. Furthermore, the common database structure was tested in national databases, background cartographic information (bathymetry, economic activities etc.) about project areas was collected and relevant maps produced.

In **kick-off meeting** (27-29 September 2005, Sigulda) an agreement concerning responsibilities and working procedures was made and the next activities were planned. The concept of GIS-action was agreed. During October 2005-January 2006 information about parameters and background data to be inserted into the database was collected from the other actions.

The **1<sup>st</sup> expert meeting on actions A6 and A7** took place on 11 January 2006 in Riga. Envisaged outputs of A6 and A7 activities were reviewed and the information needed for achieving these outputs was discussed. The types of data collected in different project actions were discussed and the preliminary attribute structure of the common GIS database was agreed. During January- March 2006 the common database structure was developed by Lithuanian GIS-expert from P13 and commented by Estonian and Latvian GIS-experts (see *1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*).

In the **2<sup>nd</sup> expert meeting on actions A6 and A7** (31 March 2006, Jurmala) the common database structure was discussed with action leaders. In April-September additional information was collected and the database structure was amended accordingly. An Excel table for inserting data was prepared and communicated, also shared with Russian partner (see *1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*).

**GIS-action was discussed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> project partners meeting** (26-27 September 2006, Riga) where the overview on action progress was given and the next steps were planned (see Annex 5.3.).

The **background cartographic information** for management plans was discussed at the national meetings and collected by GIS experts. The main information layers collected for management plans include bathymetry, sediment structure/geology, various economic and military activities. Based on this information, background maps for the stakeholders' workshop (8-9.02.2007) were produced.

The needs from GIS for management plans and species/habitats evaluations were discussed and further activities were planned in the **4<sup>th</sup> project partners meeting**, 27-28.02.2007 in Riga, Latvia (see Annex 5.3.).

Originally it was planned that data will be inserted continuously during all periods of fieldwork. However, as a result of discussion with inventory experts it was decided that not raw but already analysed data should be sent to GIS-experts. For that reason the active data entries will start from spring 2007.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

So far feedback has only been received from partners about applicability of the database – it is used for revisions and further testing and optimization.

### **List of deliverables**

- Reports from 2 expert meetings on actions A6 and A7 held on 11 January and 31 March, 2006 (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7).;
- Common database structure (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7);
- Cartographic information on economic activities and other relevant background information.

#### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

There have been no major delays or drawbacks. Some technical problems occurred during generation of Estonian national database but they have been solved. During practical testing of the database the need for specification of certain classifiers was discovered, the relevant information will be collected from the experts and the database amendments will be made in March 2007.

#### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The next activities in frame of GIS-action include: final amendments to database structure; inserting background information and fieldwork data from other actions into the GIS database; producing maps and secondary data according to the needs of other actions and information for Natura 2000 database. The GIS-databases in all three countries are planned to be finalized by 1 May 2009.

## **A.7. Development of management plan concept for MPAs and elaboration of management plans and individual protection proposals for selected project sites**

*Action leader: Anda Ruskule, Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia (Ben) – from 01.02.2007 replaced by Edgars Bojars, BEF LV, due to maternity leave of the previous action leader*

(see Annex 5.1.7 for detailed action report)

#### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

Action A.7 is the key action of the project to which all A-D actions are leading.

##### **Activity 1: Study of background literature, defining information needs for management plans**

For conceptual development of the action, most important existing documents on management planning of marine areas were collected and studied until the end of 2005. Based on this, a table on information needs for the marine management plans was prepared, indicating which project action and partners shall provide the necessary information.

The expected results of this activity have been achieved.

##### **Activity 2: Concept development for the Baltic marine management plans**

On 11 January 2006, the 1<sup>st</sup> expert meeting on Actions A6/A7 was held in Riga. The goal of the meeting was to make a detailed planning of the actions and agreements on deliverables for the MPs (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7).

On 29-30 March, 2006, the workshop "Concept development for management plans of marine protected areas" was held in Jurmala, Latvia. Its goal was to discuss the concept for development of the management plans, to get an overview on existing examples of guidelines and marine management plans and to define specific needs/conditions for the Eastern Baltic. It was concluded that the project should not develop new guidelines, but use the existing examples adopting them to marine situation. It was recognised that HELCOM guidelines do not sufficiently address the species and habitat level, which is essential from EC perspective to ensure favourable conservation status of the nature values for which Natura 2000 sites have been established (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7).

Based on the results of the workshop the overall concept of the management plan action was developed, defining also the general structure of the management plans; however, the exact content would be different in each of the countries following the national requirements (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7).

On 31 March 2006, a 2<sup>nd</sup> expert meeting on Actions A6/A7 was held in Jurmala, Latvia. It was agreed that the project shall focus on the following tasks: to more elaborate on assessment on species and habitat level; to develop analysis on lessons learned & country comparison, based on project experience in MP development; to elaborate and test best practices for stakeholders' involvement (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7).

In September 2006, a proposal on the system for evaluation of species and habitats of nature conservation interest has been developed (see Annex 5.1.7.). The expected results of this activity have been achieved.

### **Activity 3: National co-ordination meetings on management plan development**

A set of national co-ordination meetings have been held in all three Baltic States that included issues relevant to management plan development. The first meetings (October - November 2005) involved partners, competent authorities and key-stakeholders. The national particularities for management plans have been discussed and project sites selected (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 6: F4).

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> country coordination meetings in February and May 2006 further proceedings regarding management plans development were discussed (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 6: F4).

Progress of management plan elaboration has been discussed in meetings in Estonia and Latvia in January/February 2007 (see Annex 5.3.). Lithuanian meeting is planned for April 2007.

### **Activity 4: Stakeholders involvement in the process of the management plan development**

Discussions on involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the management plan development started already since the beginning of the project. Stakeholders have been informed about the project and their main concerns have been discussed in national meetings as well as through e-mail and telephone communication.

The most important event was a large workshop "Stakeholders interests and involvement in management planning and management of marine protected areas" on 8-9 February, 2007 in Lithuania where main stakeholders groups from all three countries were present. Participants of the workshop discussed their main interests, concerns and possibilities for co-operation. Best practice examples on stakeholder's involvement from UK and Germany were presented, and plans how to organise the process in the LIFE project discussed (see Annex 5.1.7.).

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

Especially the Ministry of Environment of Latvia is very interested in progress of the project and has set it as a priority - therefore regularly follows the activities and tries to solve our problems.

Since stakeholder involvement has started at early stage, positive reactions have been received from them on efforts to find out their opinions and interests, cooperation networks can be established.

### **List of deliverables**

- Reports of events( see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A);
- Table on information needs for marine management plans;
- The concept of management plan development (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A);
- The system for evaluation of the species and habitats of conservation interest (see Annex 5.1.7.);
- Maps with background information.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

In Latvia, legal aspects are problematic: there are no clear management/administration procedures for marine protected areas and management plans cannot be developed before authorisation of the borders that may influence timely completion of the plans.

In Lithuania, the approval of the management plans can take very long time. After negotiations, Ministry of Environment promised to approve the plans in a month after the delivery of the last draft.

Stakeholders' attitude is quite a sensitive issue. Many see the marine protected areas as serious obstacles for their activities, especially port authorities.

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

Collection of background information, site description, species and habitat evaluation for sites should be finished in 2007. Stakeholders mapping, networking and public information actions should be carried out by end 2007. By beginning of 2008, a seminar on results of species/habitats evaluation, general principles for conservation measures, zoning and legal implications is planned.

Management plan development is foreseen until June 2008. Site-specific monitoring programmes shall be developed by September 2008. At the end of this activity (August/September 2008), an international meeting on monitoring of protected areas should be held (funds needed to be allocated).



Public hearing procedures and submission of the plans shall be implemented by end of 2008.

## **B Land purchase – no B actions**

## **C Non-recurring biotope management**

### **C.1. Assessing and reducing impact of fishery by-catch on species of Community interest**

*Action leader: Mindaugas Dagys, Institute of Ecology, Lithuania (P13)*

(see Annex 5.2.1. for detailed action report)

#### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The implementation of this action started with the **methodological meeting** in October 2005, where methods and approaches to be used for the by-catch data collection in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were discussed and synchronised.

The first task was the **collection of background information on fisheries**. A report on fisheries structure in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will be prepared by the end of 2007.

Slightly different approaches were selected for the **collection of bird and seal by-catch data** in the three countries. In all 3 countries the fishermen or fisheries enterprises are subcontracted to provide information on their by-catch. In Lithuania and Latvia they are paid a fixed sum of money per month and if needed, also receive freezers for storage of caught birds. In Estonia, fishermen receive freezers, GPSs and within D.1 the materials for seal safe gear as means of remuneration. In Estonia, the project staff also accompanies fishermen on their fishing trips for supervision.

Special forms were prepared in national languages for fishermen to log the information on fishing as well as by-catch. These forms are regularly collected by project staff and checked for inconsistencies.

The target number of fishermen to be contracted was 10, 10 and 30 in LT, LV and EE, respectively.

**In Lithuania**, the works were postponed because of the bird flu threat. Despite this, negotiations with fishermen started in early 2006 and some by-catch information was collected from fishermen on voluntary basis. So far, 5 fisheries enterprises have been contracted in Lithuania. However, as no data on by-catch was systematically collected during the first wintering seasons, an additional fieldwork season is needed in order to collect comprehensive data on by-catch.

**In Latvia**, 7 fishermen were contracted in February 2006 and contracts with them were renewed in December 2007 for the next wintering season. 3 of these fishermen received freezers for bird storage.

**In Estonia** negotiations with fishermen were very successful, and 20 fishermen were contracted in early 2006. They all received refrigerators.

#### **Preliminary results**

**Estonian** fishermen provided information on 97 dead birds and 16 birds caught alive and released. The total bird by-catch in Lääne-Viru county was estimated to have been up to 1200 birds in 2006.

Information on seal by-catch was only collected in Estonia due to abundance of the species. An estimate based on anonymous interviews with fishermen suggests that the total seal by-catch in 2005 was approximately 260 seals in Estonia. A very rough by-catch estimate for 2006 is 300 seals.

**In Latvia**, fishermen reported about 148 entangled birds (45 of them alive) in the 1<sup>st</sup> wintering season.

Although contracts with fishermen **in Lithuania** were signed in December 2006, bad weather prevented them from fishing until February 2007. Similar situation was in Latvia, where only 2 out of 7 contracted fishermen were able to fish in December 2006 and 5 out of 7 – in January 2007.

In order to collect unbiased information on bird by-catch in investigation areas, **experimental fishing** was carried out in Lithuania and Estonia. No birds were caught during the first wintering season. In Estonia, four birds (two of them Steller's Eiders) were caught during the second wintering season.

#### **Received reactions/feed-back**

No feed-back has been received on this action so far.

### **List of deliverables**

Leaflet for fishermen in 3 languages: Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian (see Annex 5.3.).

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

Apart from the delay in by-catch data collection in Lithuania because of bird flue, contracting of fishermen as well as the collection of by-catch data progressed as planned. Bad weather conditions hampered the collection of by-catch data in Lithuania and Latvia in December 2006 and January 2007.

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The collection of by-catch data will continue in all the three countries until May 2007 and will probably be extended for one more wintering season (2008) and some additional fishermen will be contracted. The collected by-catch data will be analysed during January-June 2008.

## **C.2. Assessment of possible impact of constructions and dumping of dredged material on habitats of Community importance**

*Action leader: Georg Martin, Estonian Marine Institute (P4)*

(see Annex 5.2.2. for detailed action report)

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The action was planned to start only in 2007. But as the basis for the action is information collected during field inventories (A2, C4), it has in fact started earlier.

#### **Activity 1. Gathering relevant information**

Information from the existing dumping sites within the project areas is collected and analysed. The distribution of biological communities in the vicinity of dumping sites is currently being described by the action A2 of the project. The first set of information for project areas mapped in 2006 will be available by end of May 2007.

#### **Activity 2. Meeting to discuss the methodology of the assessment**

The first meeting on the action C2 was held in January 2006. The discussion topics included selection of model areas, methods, data needs and availability, final outputs of the action and needs for further meetings/consultations

Concerning methodology of the assessment it was agreed that each country would use its own approach and harmonisation and comparison of results would be carried out on assessment level.

#### **Activity 3. Computer modelling**

Computer modelling on sediment transport for Latvian and Lithuanian coastal waters was performed when main patterns of sediment transport for the whole coastal areas were described. The results show the main patterns of sediment transport from known dumping sites. Next steps include development of the assessment scheme to evaluate the effect of excessive sedimentation on biological communities and habitat types. This work will be carried out during 2007-2008. Activity is in progress and ahead of schedule.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

Due to early stage of work progress in Action C2 no feedback has been received yet.

### **List of deliverables**

For the moment there is no real deliverable produced yet. The results of hydrodynamic modelling of Latvian coastal areas can be treated as interim deliverable.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

No major drawbacks have been encountered so far.

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The next meeting is planned to be held in March 2007 to discuss the assessment and analysis of the results. The final product of the action will be maps of the selected pilot areas with zoning of possible impact from the dump

sites. The possible sensitivity of biological communities and habitat types to disturbance by sediment addition will be used as a basis for this zoning. The final report will include descriptions of national methods and assessment schemes used as well as final analyses and recommendations for future assessments.

### **C.3. Assessment of the impact of disturbances on waterbird and seal species of Community interest**

*Action leader: Mindaugas Dagys, Institute of Ecology, Lithuania (P13)*

(see Annex 5.2.3 for detailed action report)

#### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The action has not started yet. In accordance with the project timetable, this action will start in the second half of July 2007 with the methodological meeting of disturbance assessment experts from the Institute of Ecology of Vilnius University, Latvian Ornithological Society and Estonian Ornithological Society.

#### **Received reactions/feed-back**

N.A.

#### **List of deliverables**

N.A.

#### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

N.A.

#### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The action will start in July 2007 with a methodological meeting, where methodology and approaches for the disturbance assessment will be harmonized. Although according to the project timetable methodology, related to the disturbance assessment, has to be harmonized only by 1 June 2008, it is expected that this will be done much earlier to serve the needs of threat assessment for the management plans – no later than the end of December 2007. The report on the disturbance assessment will be completed by 1 December 2008, in accordance with the project application.

### **C.4. Assessment of the impact of transboundary and local pollution on habitats and species of Community Importance**

*Action leader: Juris Aigars, Latvian Institute for Aquatic Ecology (P8)*

(see Annex 5.2.4. for detailed action report)

#### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

First planning of action was carried out during **kick-off meeting**, September 27-29, 2005.

In January 2006 an **expert meeting** was held where substances to be analysed were agreed, time planning of action and adjustments with Action A2 fieldwork for sampling were made and specific issues of sampling, analytical procedures, data handling and reporting were discussed.

During **field season of 2006** following activities were performed:

In Lithuania, during field cruises performed in May and August 2006, 11 mollusc samples were taken for heavy metal analyses and sampling of sediments for PAHs and total oil was done in 10 stations.

In Latvia, 12 stations were sampled for mollusc *Mytilus edulis* and 9 sediment stations for PAHs and total oil during August 2006.

In Estonia, mollusc samples were collected from two locations.

After the field season of 2006, **additional sampling** and **analyses of sampled material** were started.

In Latvia analysis of collected data is going on and is expected to be completed by April 1, 2007.

In Lithuania an additional field cruise was conducted in October 2006 with additional sediment sampling. Thereafter analyses of collected data were initiated.

The work was performed according to work plan, except for P4. In this case, analyses of sampled material and additional required sampling were delayed due to problems with co-financing. However, solution with co-financing was found and delayed actions are planned to be launched as soon as weather conditions will permit.

#### **Received reactions/feed-back**

Not yet received due to early stage of action implementation.

#### **List of deliverables**

By the end of reporting period data tables for compounds are available and some preliminary maps visualizing concentration distribution in areas 12 LIT, 13 LIT and 11 LAT.

#### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

Major problem was unsettled issue of co-financing for Estonian Marine Institute (P 4).

#### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

1. Remaining project areas should be surveyed and required samples gathered during field season 2007.
2. Analyses of already sampled material will be completed during spring 2007.
3. Analyses of samples taken during field season of 2007 will be completed during autumn 2007.
4. Short assessments, one per surveyed site, will be elaborated shortly after completion of analyses, but no later than winter 2007/2008. The assessments will be amended by maps exhibiting concentration distributions at surveyed territories.
5. Joint report on all surveyed sites will be elaborated shortly after all site assessments will be completed, but no later than spring 2008.

## **D Recurring biotope management**

### **D.1. Use of by-catch safe fishing gear in pilot project areas and regular reporting**

Action leader: Markus Vetemaa, Estonian Marine Institute (P4)

(see Annex 5.2.4. for detailed action report)

#### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs**

The content of the action is to elaborate modified fishing gears, distribute them to contracted fishermen and test in practice if these fishing gears are really friendlier to environment. The tests also need to prove if these gears are sufficiently efficient in catching fish. Within the action three types of alternative fishing gear are tested:

**Type 1. Long-lines** (replacing traditional gill nets) aiming to reduce bird by-catch when catching cod and possibly salmon were tested in Lithuania in winter 2006 /2007 and will continue in 2007/2008.

First findings from the project show that the long-lines are easy to set and efforts can be compared to gill nets. The hypothesis that long-lines cause lower by-catch of cod under size limit (and no bird by-catch) in comparison to gill nets was verified. Both long-lining and gillnetting caused some by-catch of not endangered fish species *Myoxocephalus scorpius*.

**Type 2. Herring traps** (replacing traditional gill nets) aiming to reduce bird by-catch when catching herring and possibly smelt will be tested in Lithuania in 2007 and 2008. The tests have not yet started, but gears are under construction and will be ready as planned for coming field season.

**Type 3. Seal-safe fyke nets** (replacing rather similar traditional fyke nets) targeting many different fish species (salmonids, percids, cyprinids) were tested in Estonia in 2006 and will continue till 2008.

Seal-safe fyke nets have a large-mesh-size panel in the entrance, which enables to pass fish but not seals. The last part of the fyke, "fish-container" is built from extremely strong material into which the seals cannot tear holes. To reduce costs, the alternative fishing gears were built from existing gears.

12 fishermen tested 24 seal-safe fykes in 2006 in 4 Estonian project areas. In 2007 it is planned to recruit 2 more fishermen. Due to decline in price, it was possible to build and test more gears than initially planned. Modified fyke nets proved to be as efficient as "traditional" and even easier to handle because the new material does not overgrow with algae as quickly as the older one. Also, it sustains seal attacks: no large holes in the netting have been found and no by-catch of seals was recorded.

The action C was planned to run only in Estonia. However, as seal attacks to the fishing gear and by-catch of seals has considerably increased in Latvian waters, the seal safe fishing material was given also to one Latvian fisherman for testing. The results of this test will be available in end 2007.

### **Received reactions/feed-back**

The feedback from fishermen using seal-safe fykes has been very positive. Due to the high cost of material, fishermen in Baltic States have never been able to test it before. Now the news has spread and some fishermen have already started to build these nets on own financial resources (!).

The feedback from fishermen using long-lines has been also positive, because most of them realize that by-catch of birds is very bad to the "image" of fishery. The feedback from larger public has been also very positive. But especially remarkable is the harmony and positive feedback from environmentalists and fishermen, who very often have conflicting interests. In Estonia alternative fishing gear has even been added as target for the national programme for structural funds for fishery

### **List of deliverables**

The main deliverable so far is information received from tests carried out during activities of testing type 1 and type 3 gears.

### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

There have been no major drawbacks. Some fishermen contacted during the planning period of the project were listed out due to too small fishing effort but they have been replaced by new "recruits".

### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

Sub-actions A and C will be carried out according to the plan. Long-lining will be repeated in Nov. 2007 - April 2008. Herring traps will be tested in spring 2007 and 2008. In autumn 2008 reports will be available. Seal-safe fyke nets will be tested in all 2007. After two testing seasons it is possible to reach reliable conclusions. Tests will be conducted also in 2008 but data received from the third season will be used for verification and "fine tuning" of the results.

## **E Public awareness and dissemination of information**

Action leader for all E actions: Žymantas Morkvėnas, Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, (P2)

See Annex 5.3. for detailed action report

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs.**

#### **E.1 Production and distribution of information flyer for stakeholders**

During the reporting period two information flyers were prepared and published.

The first one contains **general information about the project** and is distributed to a wide group of stakeholders: state authorities, experts in the Baltic Sea region and other EU countries, different “economic” stakeholders. The flyer was printed in Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian and also in English languages, 2000 copies in total (initially it was planned to print 3000 copies in 3 languages) (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 5: E1).

The second flyer was **targeted to the fishermen as specific stakeholder group**. It includes information about biological values of the marine environment and Natura 2000 network. In the partner’s meeting it was decided to expend the flyer volume from what was originally planned and to focus not only on by-catch problems for birds and mammals, but also promote alternative fishing gear and methods reducing by-catch. The flyer also contains basic information about the project and relevant contact information. The flyer was printed in 200 copies of each Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian languages (see Annex 5.3.).

Both flyers were distributed during project seminars and meetings, through Ministries of Environment and their subordinated institutions. A small amount of flyers is remaining to be distributed in specific events of the project. This activity is in fact completed.

#### **E.2 Development and maintenance of the project website “The Baltic Sea Portal”**

Accompanying the project start, the website was launched ([www.balticseaportal.net](http://www.balticseaportal.net)) and is continuously updated. At first basic information about the project was published on the website; simultaneously with the progressing activities more information was uploaded and also translated into the five project languages (English, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Russian). Currently the website contains descriptions of the project activities, lists of partners, donors and project areas; photo gallery, news section and the download section. A new information package is under preparation, which will include more detailed information for the general public about species and habitats concerned.

The project team has also developed the concept of an educational tool to be launched in autumn 2007. The aim is to inform about marine biodiversity of the Eastern Baltic Sea but also stress importance of the human attitude and threats as well as show the importance of the Baltic Sea for economic stakeholders. This tool will address youth/schoolchildren as well as the general public. It will be based on an interactive map of the Baltic Sea.

The web site has also a project management function: for communication and information exchange among the project partners, an extranet system was designed.

This project activity is continuously in progress according to the project schedule. As indicator of success of this activity it is foreseen to estimate frequency of visits to the website by hit statistics.

#### **E.3 Production of Film/DVD Material “The Eastern Baltic Marine Environment”**

During the reporting period, the editorial team has elaborated a detailed concept for the Film series and discussed it with the individual experts of the actions. The film material will contain 20 short video clips each telling a story about marine environment objects (e.g. wintering birds, fish species or certain economic activities) (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 5: E3). The editorial team has defined the stories and is gathering filming material.

This project activity is continuously in progress according to the project schedule.

#### **E.4 Work with media**

During the reporting period, several contacts with media supplemented by press releases were initiated. Few articles and TV story related to the project were shown in the national media (see Annex 5.3.). The project team keeps informing media about interesting events happening in the project. As soon as the film material from E.3 is prepared, it is agreed to show this in the environmental broadcasting series in the countries.

#### **E.5 Production and setting up information boards at strategic places accessible for public**

This activity will be implemented in the next reporting period according to the schedule.

#### **E.6 Production/distribution of the book “Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea”**

This activity will be implemented in the next reporting period according to the schedule. However, concept development for the book has already started.

#### **E.7 Organization of public events in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**

This activity will be implemented in the next reporting period according to the schedule.

#### **E.8 Organization of international experience exchange on preliminary project results**

The preparation of the first event - international seminar called “Bird conservation in the marine environment: facing designation of marine protected areas and addressing threats in the Baltic Sea and beyond” has started. Initially it was planned to be organized in the first half of 2007. However, due to delays in bird inventory activities caused by bad weather conditions, it was decided to postpone also the event since it aims at presenting the initial results of the inventories. It is now scheduled for October 3-5, 2007. Agenda building and communication with speakers is currently going on. Conceptual preparation meeting on conference was held on 14 February 2007 (see Annex 5.3.).

#### **E.9 Production and dissemination of the Layman’s report**

This activity will be implemented in the last reporting period according to the schedule.

#### **E.10 Final project presentation**

This activity will be implemented in the last reporting period according to the schedule.

#### **In addition to the points mentioned above please indicate when appropriate reactions/feed-back were received**

The stakeholders evaluated the flyers as very informative, especially flyer for fishermen. The website has got also good evaluation; however, there were requests to put there more information, especially about project investigations. Nevertheless, the project partners have agreed that biological information must be processed before being published, information on protected areas has to be treated with care to avoid misunderstandings and myths, which later will harm the conservation success.

#### **List of deliverables**

- E.1 Copies of the flyers (general project and special targeted to fishermen) (see Annex 5.3.)
- E.2 Internet page screen shot [www.balticseaportal.net](http://www.balticseaportal.net) (see Annex 5.3)
- E.3 List of the topics/stories for the films (see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 5: E3)
- E.4 Copies of media articles and TV stories (see Annex 7.)
- E.8 Draft agenda of the seminar on Birds (see Annex 5.3.)

#### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

Unfavourable weather conditions for the inventories as well as the normal project character that it takes time to set up a project and come to outputs were the main drawbacks encountered. Therefore work with media (E4) was rather passive, since media is mostly interested in concrete results, not in descriptions of investigation methods. However, it will not have any major drawbacks for the completion of the E4 activity, since the project is well progressing and will be interesting for media soon.

The unfavourable weather conditions impacted the first international experience exchange seminar (E8) as a consequence of delayed bird inventory actions. However, the delay will be of no importance to reaching the project objectives and has no negative impact.

#### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The activities will be performed as planned in the schedule listed in the project application. During 2007/2008 public awareness activities will be focused on work with media, update of the website, international experience exchange seminar and compiling material for the book. In 2008/2009 the project final publications will be prepared.

## **F Overall project management**

*Action leader for all F actions:*

*Heidrun Fammer, LIFE project manager, Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia (Ben.)*

See Annex 5.4. for detailed action report

### **Conducted activities and resulting outputs.**

#### **F.1 Establishment/meetings of the Project Steering Group, monitoring of project progress**

Up to now two steering group meetings were held (see Annex 5.4).

The project steering group has met first time on 13 January 2006, after the second partners meeting. Representatives from the Ministries of Environment and competent authorities from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were invited. Also the major co-financers were represented and different stakeholder groups such as fishermen's association and environmental NGOs. The Steering group defined its role and agreed on procedures as well as on next meeting and decided that it should meet approximately each 9 months or once a year. The project was given positive feedback for its ambitions and good start.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> steering group meeting on 28 September 2006 was chaired by the Latvian Ministry of Environment, Mr. Valdis Bisters. The project team presented the results from the first project year. The steering group gave advice on certain questions, mainly with regards to the legal process of the management plan and protection rules development.

The next steering group meeting is scheduled for autumn 2007 and will be chaired by Estonian competent authority.

#### **F.2 Overall project management and administration**

The first project activities in August and September 2005 after and during contracting between European Commission and project beneficiary were setting up of the financial management scheme by the beneficiary. For this purpose, a special account was opened at *AS Hansabanka*, Latvia, the only bank, which was willing to issue the required bank guarantee for the first rate of the Commission grant. After long negotiations the bank guarantee was issued on 19 October 2005. It operates in form of a "frozen" account, which the beneficiary can access once a month and order payments to partners or to its own operating account to reimburse project spendings.

After the project kick-off meeting, the contracts with each partner were prepared (see Annex 5.4 for one contract as example between beneficiary and partners). The common budget was divided according to activities & involvement of all partners as laid down in the joint budget, the own financial contribution is calculated as percentage of partner's budget. According to their budget all partners receive a share of the overheads. Partners are made responsible for their budget in terms of pre-payments and reporting in the EU format. Except for some partners' equipment purchase and one external contract no prepayments were made; most partners are accounting with beneficiary quarterly, some less frequent; partners are regularly submitting time sheets, expenditure reports and copies of all receipts/invoices. The beneficiary's bookkeeper controls all documentation, agrees on revisions if needed and reimburses the invoiced sum taking into account partners' own contribution. At the end of each reporting cycle the bookkeeper merges the expenditure reports and produces one joint balance.

Although the financial reporting seems to be tough for the partners, the beneficiary set up such scheme to keep tight control over such a large amount of partners (20) from 7 different countries. After challenging first reporting cycles one can state that the project financial system has been set up efficiently and is working well. The project bookkeeper has established the LIFE accounting system at partners' and visits them frequently. Meanwhile most partners have exercised 3 or 4 reporting activities, earlier mistakes or unclear questions have been solved and corrected, for example after advice from the external monitoring team or the EC.

The organisation of action implementation is taking place in "cross-country setting" with ONE action leader from one of the countries and relevant counter parts for action implementation in the other two Baltic States. The role of the Russian partner is the one of an observer and trainee learning the methods and comparing to theirs. Experts from the three other partners (Birdlife, Metsahallitus, BfN) act as resource persons. The action leader is responsible for action reporting to the beneficiary, as well on quarterly basis. Furthermore, the action leaders are participating and reporting at steering group meetings and are asked to hold regular meetings with the experts from the cross national teams. Joint field visits

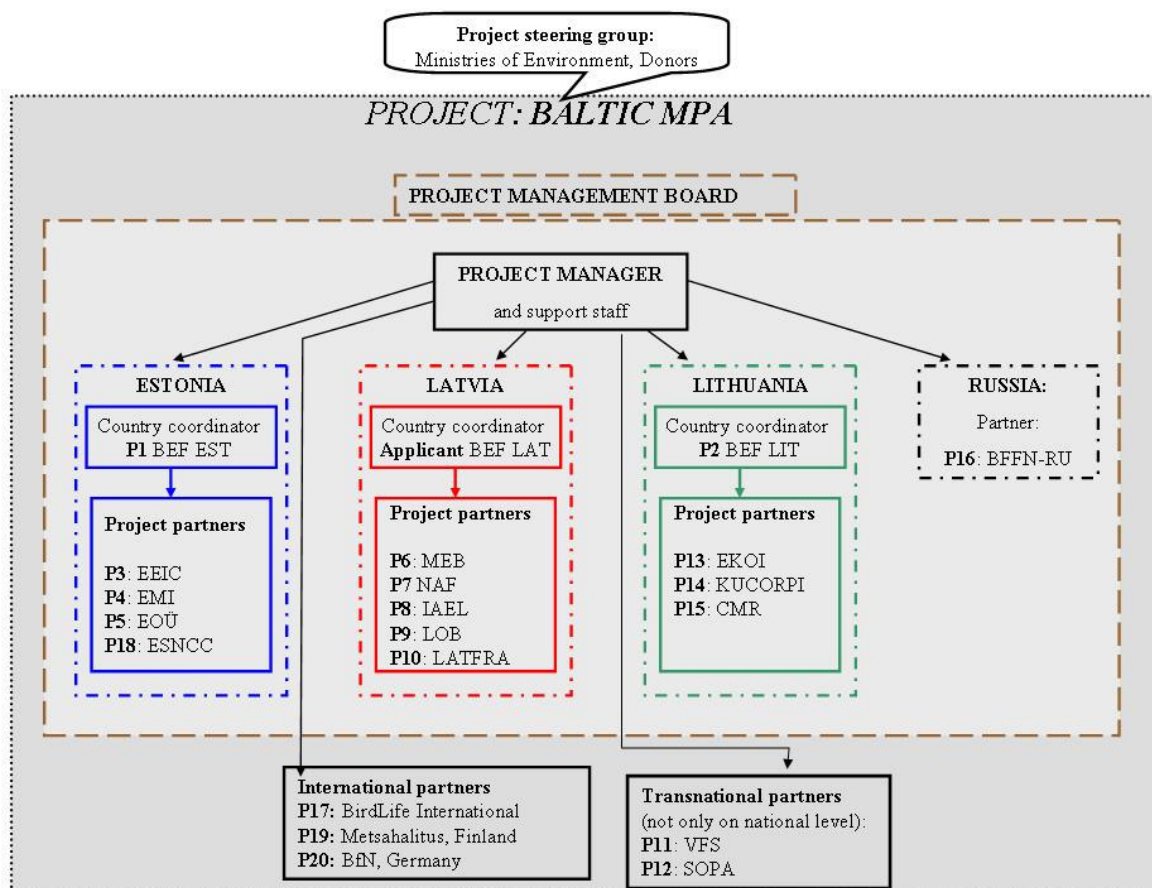


and discussions on methodologies are rounding up the efforts of the project to create synergies from the cross-national setting.

As up-to-date communication tool for project management, the interactive web site (“Extranet”) with its partner log-in function is established and used. Not only inventory data, photos or future maps shall be stored and accessed through the Extranet, but also project reports and management communication is flowing through this tool.

Project manager and the three country coordinators and the assistants from the BEF offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are meeting frequently to feedback on project progress, administration challenges and undertake project planning jointly. The coordinator at the Russian partner is in close contact to communicate the participation of its experts in the actions.

The updated project management organigram is illustrating the partner structure (the updating has been made in terms of changes in partner names/legal status and one additional partner):



The scheme functions well and is implemented according to its design.

Last but not least the project manager is in close contact with the external monitoring team and received advice from the monitoring expert in all questions asked so far.

### F.3 Establishment/meetings of the Project Management Board

The project management board is the decision-making organ of the LIFE project, while the steering group gives advice and brings in donor interests. Big partners’ meetings are organised twice a year, in-between smaller partners’ meetings are held during project events, e.g. seminars, and give opportunity to discuss a few topics, but not the complex project setting obligatory for all partners to participate. Sometimes the combination with events makes it difficult to distinguish between partners meeting and action meeting in terms of reporting, however all meetings are documented still with some flexibility in the name of action

So far four bigger and one smaller partner’s meetings have been carried out (see Annex 5.4 for more detailed description).

The partners’ meetings bring the spirit of cooperation among the countries and different institutions to an optimum in the project and are an excellent tool for project management. The exchange of information helps the holistic view on the ecosystem and avoids too narrow expert judgement.

### F.4 Country Co-ordination Meetings

Another management level of the project is the national level (only in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, not in Russia). For this purpose all partners of one relevant country meet frequently under the leadership of the relevant BEF office. Exempted from the national meetings are the two Latvian partners P11 and P12 (film and web maker) who serve cross-national project actions.

So far, 3 Lithuanian, 5 Estonian and 6 Latvian country coordination meetings have been held (see Annex 5.4 for more detailed description).

The meetings on national level among project partners and competent authorities proved to be very useful for project progress, especially with regard to management plan development. Action A7 and F4 therefore are closely interlinked. The competent authorities are clear in their demands and give good support, especially when it comes to legal advice and door-opening at stakeholders.

#### **F.5 Project Monitoring (effects of measures)**

This activity will be implemented in the last reporting period according to the schedule. However, the Action leader of D.1, the only recurring management measures, has elaborated already a few indicators to be discussed among the partners (see Annex 5.2.4.).

#### **F.6 Independent audit**

Although the LIFE grant requires the audit only at the end of the project, the bank, "Hansabanka", which gives the bank guarantee and operates the project account, has set the rule that the project account has to be audited twice a year to supervise correct financial management continuously. For the European Commission only the final Audit report following CP format will be attached, however, we would like to notify that frequent payment rates are agreed with the auditor to cover the single working steps. These invoices will be classified as advance payment rates, the final invoice will be declared as final payment. Based on best price offer, the company BDO Invest was selected out of three companies and is contracted for the project auditing according to the requirements of the European Commission. According to the first audit reports produced for the bank, the auditor found all financial operations as according to rules and had no objections to the beneficiary's financial management.

#### **F.7 After-LIFE Conservation Plan**

This activity will be implemented in the last reporting period according to schedule.

#### **In addition to the points mentioned above please indicate when appropriate reactions/feed-back were received**

Feedback on the project management performance is mainly received from the partners, who testify the beneficiary's good leadership, efficient project management and excellent guidance regarding financial reporting, which is for most of partners obviously not an easy task and the care-taking by project management and project accountant is appreciated. The steering group has given the feedback that the project seems to be well set up; the same the external monitoring team.

#### **List of deliverables**

Reports from events of F.1, F.3 and F.4 actions (see Annex 5.4).

#### **Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

No major problems have been encountered for project administration, management and communication/cooperation with the partners.

Financial reporting according to LIFE requirements based on expenditure reporting is tricky for state authorities in the Baltic States and partly also for the academic partners due to different bookkeeping requirements – but so far all partners were able to set up LIFE-conform expenditure reporting in their bookkeeping system. Some partners from state authorities face problems with pre-payments for project activities especially when crossing the calendar year, but the project management and the relevant partners have solved this in mutual understanding.

#### **Planned activities and reports to the expected until the end date of the project.**

The activities will be performed as planned in the schedule listed in the project application.

## 6. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Process

The overall project implementation process is going very well, the team is highly motivated and all partners contribute to the success. So far no action had to be revised— most of assumptions or defined action needs proved to be true and first results from the action implementation show that a lot of efforts are needed to establish a well-managed system of Marine protected areas, which without LIFE funds could not have started in such comprehensive way. The project actions, although still dominated by field works, are running well and will lead to a good result with the management plans.

The project activities start to become well-known also beyond partners' cycle and stakeholders appreciate early integration into the management plan development as exercised within the project, although not demanded explicitly by legislation in Lithuania and Estonia (only "public information" not "involvement" is required). The alternative fishery action becomes a flagship of stakeholder integration and seems to be attractive for the target group to participate.

### Project management

No project management problems are encountered and all action, communications, cross-country action implementation, financial management and reporting is well under control. Experience in partner management proves, that the choice of the German project manager working at beneficiary (Western European salary rate) was correct, because hardly a local person would be able to manage the large number of partners, variety of actions and the big size of budget.

Financial reporting is a challenge for most of the project partners, although beneficiary team is supporting, supervising and controlling – the accounting systems in Eastern Europe are simply slowly adjusting to EU-grant-conform standards and legislation is changing permanently bringing new obstacles for bookkeeping. However, also the international partners unexpectedly do not show much more experience with financial reporting.

### Success and failures

**Methodology:** So far no failures with applied methodologies could be noticed. Partly the methods have been developed jointly by the project team, partly they were transferred from international partners (BirdLife International, Metsahallitus - Finland) and implemented first time in the Baltic States. Harmonisation of methods among the countries and data comparability are a goal of the actions and the project puts a lot of efforts into it. The action leaders are among the most competent marine biologists in the Eastern Baltic Sea Region and contribute substantially to the methodological development and coordination among the countries - the trans-national cooperation aspect for sure is a great success right from the beginning of the project.

**Results:** Although most of actions are in the peak of investigations or partly just started, we do have a few preliminary results, partly spectacular ones:

In Lithuania a **new habitat** for the south-eastern Baltic Sea was discovered - moraine ridges, which are remnants from glacial period. The ridges are mapped, but need to be investigated further, as so far very little is known on formation, spread, value and the role of this habitat in ecosystem. At the moment it is discovered only in one place at Lithuanian coast (ca. 80 % investigated). Similar habitats were found also in Latvian coastal waters but these are much smaller. These habitats are not listed in Annex II of Habitats Directive and also not in HELCOM Red data book of Baltic biotopes.

In Estonia breeding bird survey was carried out in May in South Saaremaa. This survey yielded very interesting and rather unexpected results – many **new breeding colonies of Birds Directive Annex I species** were discovered (e.g. Barnacle Goose, Sandwich Tern, Little Tern).

The total number of **Ringed Seals** in the Gulf of Riga is  $1475 \pm 30\%$ , which is almost the same as 10 years ago. That means that there has been either **no reproduction or some extra mortality** during these years, otherwise this number should be twice bigger.

The results of the fish species inventory got so far are in rather good accordance with the starting hypotheses about the existence and abundance of the target species. However, somewhat surprising has been the **high occurrence of *Cottus gobio*** (4 EST and 5EST) and ***Cobitis taenia*** (3 EST) in marine areas. Both species are listed in the Annex II of the Habitats Directive. This means that besides freshwater populations Estonia has also strong and healthy marine (= brackish water) populations of these species.

**Cost efficiency:** The project budget has a total volume of 3.1 Million €. It shall be spent among 21 partners and over 48 months for 29 project actions and in 13 marine areas. 37% of it are personnel costs, the biggest budget position, and involved a large variety of experts from 7 countries.

Per Partner personnel costs would be 55,000€ in average – 1,150 € per project month per partner. Per project site the budget could be defined as 240,000€ if dividing total budget by 13 sites – rather small for an average sites related LIFE project.

Most works are implemented by the partner's own personnel, external assistance is mainly rent of vehicles (ships, planes, cars) or equipment services (satellite channels), furthermore seminar services and publishing costs – little works are sub-contracted out of the competencies of partners.

Equipment makes only 10% of budget – a rather small amount for a LIFE project, it is mainly needed for reaching sites (boats), data processing and inventories (fishing gear, underwater equipment).

Under the condition of complexity in size and activities the project can be called very cost efficient!

### **Comparison against the project-objectives**

The objectives of the project were listed in the application as follows:

- Complete the establishment of Natura 2000 in the marine territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (site selection, designation, protection, and management);
- Assess and reduce the impact of fishery by-catch on target bird and mammal species;
- Assess and address other threats to marine Natura 2000 sites (e.g., caused by construction/development, disturbance of species by economic or recreational activities, pollution);
- Increase public and stakeholder awareness on Natura 2000, marine protected areas and biodiversity in general in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia;
- Promote transboundary networking and capacity building on marine protected areas between the Baltic States, other EU Member States and Russia.

For the current reporting period we can state that all actions to reach the objectives have started and the project is on its way to reach them. No major delays or obstacles to reach the objectives and produce the expected results are currently visible or guessable. The objectives will be reached by the end of the project only, as planned, as they are not in sequential order, but in parallel.

A learning about objective 1: “marine territories” is not equal to “marine waters” – the term “territorial waters” should be used in the current LIFE project as objective to differentiate from “Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)”, where countries also have to designate N2000 areas.

As the project cannot act outside nominated or proposed Natura 2000 sites, the full completion of all possible Natura 2000 areas in the marine waters of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will not be reached due to the fact that investigations in the countries' EEZ are not planned in the LIFE project (a bit misleading formulation in the objectives as the project has learned).

### **Environmental benefits, policy and legislation implications**

One of the issues having important implications on Natura 2000, that evolved from international expert seminars in the project, is the lack of inter-linkage between the following EU policies: Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Strategy – all of them defining targets for marine species, habitats, water qualities etc, and all having an impact on the Natura 2000 site designation. The project aims at adding up a workshop to get deeper understanding of this inter-linkage and also contributing with a background paper to the European level discussion.

Another topic having implications on Natura 2000 implementation in marine territories, as noticed by the project team, is the lack of experience with EIA and habitat Directive Article 6 assessments for plans and projects in the vicinity of (potential) Natura 2000 sites as the recent developments of wind park concepts, the North European Gas Pipeline and wishes for infrastructure development of harbours and bridges near the current project sites show. The project partners are concerned and understand the urgency of final site designation and elaboration of management plans for the current sites (and EEZ) and the needs for awareness raising on the nature values to be sustained, but the time pressure of economic development might seriously impact Natura 2000 establishment respectively sustainability.

### **Innovation, demonstration value**

One of the goals of the project, to develop a practical concept for marine management plans and test it with a few examples in different countries, aims at replication in other marine protected areas. Due to the fact that designation of marine N2000 sites is not far developed in all EU countries, the new management plans from the Baltic sites will be an innovative contribution and added value to EU policy implementation.

The project team aims at promoting replication of this management plan concept, especially within the Baltic Sea region, but also in other seas. The cooperation and capacity building measure at the Russian project partner will even ensure the methods financed by EU LIFE funds to be replicated in non-EU countries. Additional funds have been applied already at the GEF to start implementation also in Russian areas with the current partners.

### **Socio-economic effects**

Within the management plan development and its integrated stakeholder dialogue the socio-economic effects of the plans must be described as integrated part of the economic assessment. As the goal of the management plans is to define management activities in large areas targeting at different economic sectors, we can assume that it will have positive implications on the employment structure at the coastal areas if protected areas will be designated and demand certain management and supervision. For the moment it is too early to judge on the question, as the project team will elaborate on them only in 2008.

### **The future: sustainability**

Although the areas currently investigated within the LIFE project will be protected as Natura 2000 sites and direct destruction of the habitats at site will then be not a threat anymore (if all protection proposals will be accepted and implemented), the marine environment in the waters of the Baltic States is not automatically safeguarded. The current LIFE project could only act in a small part of the territory to be investigated (and protected?), and during current project implementation stage the uttermost need to do further investigations in territories outside the LIFE project areas has become visible: the project teams especially in Estonia and Latvia are approached by wind park developers with the question where to construct the wind parks and there is nearly no information about species and habitats in the countries EEZ.

Environmental Impact Assessments for marine areas have not been undertaken yet and the data/information about habitats and species outside the currently investigated areas is scarce. Therefore efforts need to be undertaken to go beyond the current sites of investigations and expand the current LIFE project concept.

After the management plans have been developed and the project is finished the real management actions need to be implemented and a monitoring system established and functioning to guarantee efficient protection in long-term future.

### **Long term indicators of the project success**

The project has defined indicators for monitoring the success of its only recurring management action D.1, the alternative fishery activities as follows:

- changes in by-catch of seals (%)
- share of fishermen (% of total) informed about the alternative fyke nets
- share of fishermen (% of total) using the seal panels

Possible indicators to measure the success of the long-lining and herring trap sub-action (LT):

- share of fishermen (% of total) informed about the alternative long lines and herring traps
- share of fishermen (% of total) using the long-lines and herring trap
- fishing efforts in comparison to traditional gill net efforts

Going beyond the project duration the successful implementation of well-developed management plans has to ensure good conservation status of species and habitats. The project will naturally define in its management plan indicators, which will later measure species and habitat conservation status, however, in the current project no direct management measures except the fishery activity are planned.

In Latvia, MPAs have not yet been designated; therefore the specific indicator "Number (area) of the proposed MPAs that have been designated as protected" fits well measuring the project success. As MPAs have already been designated in Lithuania and Estonia and the project is only revising boundaries and defining protection regime, the indicator is not significant for the both countries.

Submission of management plans for the competent authorities is one of the main goals of the project. This will be measured by the indicator "Number of the submitted management plans related to the countries' target". Relating the management plan development to the conservation status and protection regime question, then the main success indicator of the project could be defined as:

**"Protection regime proposals as defined by the project team and included in management plans are accepted by competent authority 100%"**.

## **7. PLANNED PROJECT PROGRESS**

### **A.1 Raising Capacity of Project Staff**

Last activity: study visit of project partners to Russian marine protected areas in spring 2008.

### **A.2 Benthic Habitat Inventory**

The planned activities include: international workshop “Features and interpretation of Natura 2000 marine habitats in the Baltic countries” in Klaipeda (14-16 May 2007); Finalizing fieldwork in remaining pilot areas by November 2007; Processing of data collected from fieldwork by end of 2008; Final report on benthic habitats including maps by beginning 2009.

### **A.3 Waterbird Inventory**

The collection of field data from water bird surveys will continue until April 2008. Analysis of the collected data will start already in summer 2007, while final results of the birds inventory, including the identified most important areas for water birds, will be available in early 2008.

### **A.4 Marine Mammal Inventory**

Ringed seal breeding distribution survey is planned for March 2007 and April 2008. Data will be analyzed and total population abundance will be calculated by end of May 2008, main distribution maps will be produced and key areas for ringed seals described by autumn 2008. Harbour porpoise acoustic study will be launched in May 2007 and finished in November 2008, assessment of data by December 2008. Grey seal telemetry survey will start in June 2007. Special link to the project web page for public to follow the location of seals will be installed. Spatial data analyses and final distribution maps, home ranges etc will be produced by the end of October 2008. Report on marine mammal abundance by end 2008.

### **A.5 Fish Species Inventory**

Further work plan includes fieldworks and analysis of results by early 2008 and submission of information to management plans authors. Report on fish species abundance by mid 2008.

### **A.6 GIS Database**

The next activities include final amendments to database structure; background information and fieldwork data from other actions into the GIS database; maps and secondary data according to the needs of other actions and information for Natura 2000 database. The GIS-databases in all three countries shall be finalized by 1 May 2009.

### **A.7 Management Plan Development**

Collection of background information, site description, species and habitat evaluation for sites should be finished in 2007. Stakeholders mapping, networking and public information actions should be carried out by end 2007. By beginning of 2008, a seminar on results of species/habitats evaluation, general principles for conservation measures, zoning and legal implications is planned. Management plans shall be drafted by June 2008. Site-specific monitoring programmes shall be developed by September 2008 and introduced at an international meeting. Public hearing procedures and submission of the plans to competent authorities for approval shall be implemented by end of 2008.

### **C.1 By-catch Assessment**

The collection of by-catch data will continue until May 2007 and will probably be extended for one more wintering season (2008). In Lithuania, additional fishermen will be selected for this season. In Latvia, fishermen unable to provide data in late 2006 due to severe weather conditions will be asked to register their activity also in autumn 2007. In Estonia the contracts with 2 fishermen must be cancelled due to decline of activity and new fishermen selected. Due to the declining effort of fishermen it is planned to increase the total number of contracted fishermen to 30 for 2007–2008 wintering season. Analysis of the collected by-catch data will start in January 2008 and will be finished by the end of June 2008.

## **C.2 Dumping/Dredging Assessment**

The final product of the action will be maps of the pilot areas with zoning of possible impact from dump sites. Those maps will be formatted in similar way and illustrate the effect of the selected dump sites on the surrounding marine environment. The final report will include descriptions of national methods and assessment schemes as well as recommendations for future assessments. Maps and report will be completed by December 2008.

## **C.3 Disturbance Assessment**

The action will start in July 2007 with a meeting to harmonise methodology and approaches. Although according to the project timetable methodology has to be harmonized only by 1 June 2008, it is expected that this will be done much earlier to serve the needs of threat assessment for the management plans – no later than the end of December 2007. The report on the disturbance assessment will be completed by 1 December 2008.

## **C.4 Pollution Assessment**

Remaining project areas should be surveyed and required samples gathered during field season 2007. Analyses of samples will be completed during autumn of 2007. Short assessments of sites will be elaborated by winter 2007/2008. The assessments will be amended by maps exhibiting concentration distributions at surveyed territories. Joint report on all surveyed sites will be elaborated by spring 2008.

## **D.1 Alternative Fishery**

Long-lining will be repeated in November 2007 - April 2008. Herring traps replacing traditional gill netting will be tested in spring- 2007 and 2008. Seal-safe fyke nets will be tested until 2008. In autumn 2008 reports will be available.

## **E Actions**

The activities will be performed as planned in the schedule listed in the project application. During 2007/2008 public awareness activities will be focused on work with media, update of the website and preparation of two international seminars. In end of 2008 the project book will be published. In 2008/2009 the project final publications (layman's report, After Life Conservation Plan) will be prepared.

## **F Actions**

Steering group meetings, partners meetings and national coordination meetings will be held in the agreed frequency, partly also attached to project seminars. Partners are accounting with beneficiary regularly, most of them quarterly, those with less activities half-yearly. The project will prepare the 2<sup>nd</sup> progress report by July 2008 and the final report after project end by October 2009.

## 8. COMMENTS ON FINANCIAL REPORT

Up to date of last accounting (28.02.2007) 163% of the first EC rate has been spent and therefore the interim report was prepared based on the February expenditures with the aim to receive the 2nd instalment as well earlier to guarantee smooth action implementation.

Table 1 shows the spending by budget positions by 28.02.2007:

LIFE Form	Position	Total cost according EC decision	costs incurred by 28.02.07	% of spending
F3	personnel	1,152,863	412,122	35.75
F4	travel*	417,865	107,923	25.83
F5	external assistance*	611,391	167,734	27.43
F6	infrastructure	-	-	0.00
F7	equipment*	339,215	170,149	50.16
F8	prototype	-	-	0.00
F9	land purchase	-	-	0.00
F10	consumables*	219,346	49,573	22.60
F11	other costs*	168,636	40,063	23.76
overheads	7% of subtotal	202,000	65,218	32.29
total	eligible costs	3,089,016	1,012,782	32.79
total	Real costs	3,111,316	1,014,757	34.17
project duration (months)		48	19	39.58
1st rate of EC		622,263	% of EC rate spent	163

\* costs including non recoverable VAT

The exchange rate used for recalculation of LVL and RUB was the following: EUR-LVL 0.6987, and EUR-RUB 34.987 (date of recalculation: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007 - on 1<sup>st</sup> of May no exchange rate was issued due to statutory holiday)

The total percentage of spending is 32.79% in 39.58% of project time passed. No major shortcomings so far, but some needs for changing budget positions against each other (see below). The slightly lower spending compared to time passed is to be explained with natural delay at project start, several costs planned for later project stage (some C actions, large parts of E actions, project audit) and some minor delays due to weather conditions or obstacles with equipment providers.

**Personnel costs** are spent constantly, however, some partners have spent higher personnel costs in comparison to project time passed so far due to rapid salary increase in the Baltic States and this trend will increase in the second half of the project. State institutions have substantially increased salaries, which can be seen in the personnel cost reporting of e.g. P3, P6 or P10 in 2007 (See Annex 1) and the forecast for state institutions says that for 2008 and 2009 each year 10-15% salary increase is planned. Budget revisions to allow the necessary involvement of the experts are proposed below.

**Travel** budget was overestimated and spent less due to change of action procedures (e.g. less accommodation for field work needed due to sleeping on the navy ship for A.3 action), less mixed teams for A.2 due to better logistic arrangements and a lot of organised synergies (longer partner meetings combined with action meetings) to avoid unnecessary commuting.

Partner P1 travelled instead project manager (broken leg) to Russia in March 2006 for project supervision – travel to Russia was approved for beneficiary.

One shortcoming regarding travel: no international travel was foreseen for partners and this seems to be necessary to introduce the LIFE project's achievements, a lot of international attention is noticed and partners would like to show the project at international arena (see revisions below).

The travel position already contains expenditure from P7, National Armed Forces of Latvia, for A.3 bird count by ship – although it was planned as external assistance in the original project, however we attributed these costs to the travel position as they cannot be sub-contracted anymore due to administrative change of the ship ownership (belongs to P7). We have attributed the costs to travel position as the ship is taking a route from harbour A to harbour B along the Latvian coast and counts ship



hours in its internal recording (costs are justified with share of fuel bills related to ship hours for action implementation). A justification for request to change the budget positions for these expenses is given below.

In the original budget some confusion occurred for car and boat fuel costs – on advice of the external monitoring team we have placed all fuel where a direction from A to B can be documented under travel and fuel at a site implementing e.g. fishing activities is placed under consumables. Also fuel reimbursed to partners on monthly basis for several destinations is placed under consumables to keep the system of distinguishing “travel” from “commuting”.

**External assistance:** seminar costs for Action A.2: instead of one large scale seminar the project partners decided that rather a series of 3-4 smaller seminars (with less participants) on the habitat issue shall be performed and the costs consequently split into smaller portions. 2 events were held within A.2, one is to come in May 2007.

**Equipment** has been bought by most of partners to a large extent, pending are the mammal related equipment pieces (P18 - A4, due to change of technology) – equipment is ordered, partly arrived in April, rest to come in May; furthermore the filming equipment (P11 - E.3) – filming is starting in summer season and related equipment is ordered; Herring traps (P13 – D.1) cannot be purchased as ready product as originally planned, but must be at first produced during spring 2007 (buying the netting material and delegating the labour as external contract).

The beneficiary confirms that the threshold for low valuable good is kept when placing a bill to equipment or consumable budget positions, therefore a few positions from some partners had to be shifted to equipment. The threshold differs from country to country – e.g. in Estonia it is 1,500€, while in LV and LT the institution can set their own rules.

**Other costs** - largest positions are the bank guarantee, paid regularly, and the audit, which according to LIFE practice is paid at the end of the project. However, the current project has agreed for a slightly different procedure of interim payments with its auditor as the conditions of the bank for the guarantee - as laid down in the project application and budget (accepted by EC with contract) – was to have regular auditor's checks instead one final check at project end only. Therefore the audit will be paid in several instalments.

**In general the budget size is appropriate for the project and the proportion of the budget positions as well – it is expected that spending will not exceed the 10% margin.**

**Personnel costs are increasing quicker than expected in the countries and also more work is required at some partners than originally foreseen, but the project partners will keep the 10% margin, still many partners would like to shift funds to personnel costs.**

**Careful planning of future expenditures and discussions with each partner lead the project manager to the conclusion that the budget should be revised inside its single positions – not largely changing their total size, but refining their technical details, size or shifts.**

For this purpose a table is prepared summarising the changes in sums/€ by position and partner as well as a fully revised budget in the F forms is attached with indication of the changing descriptions, sums or additions (see Annex 3.1 and 3.2).

In summary the beneficiary and its partners wish to increase position personnel by 5% (+58,014€), travel decrease by 3% (-12,465€), decrease external assistance by 6% (-37,332€), increase equipment by 2% (+5,563), increase consumables by 1% (+2,220€) and decrease other costs by 9% (-16,000€).

**The beneficiary asks the European Commission kindly to approve these changes** and hopes that they can be considered as within the current budget and will not require a contract modification.

In the following the changes are explained in words - at first the most fundamental changes are described and then the revision proposals partner by partner and budget position by position:

In several cases the original **placing of cost positions** in the original budget have to be revised due to different procedures in contracting/spending:

- a. The ship for the bird counts in Latvia (Action A.3 by P7, 66,500€) was positioned in external assistance, but it turned out, when preparing the partner contract, that due to reorganisation the navy ship is not anymore contracted from a different legal entity but now belongs to the partner's institution, therefore no external contract was possible. We would like to attribute the costs to travel position as the ship is taking a route from harbour A to harbour B along the Latvian coast and counts ship hours

in its internal recording (costs are justified with share of fuel bills related to ship hours for action implementation). Placing the fuel to consumables would relate to a substantial increase of that particular budget position, which we would like to avoid. We would like to highlight, that these are additional travel costs of the partner as naturally the Latvian Navy does not do bird inventories during daily activities – therefore these travel costs shall not be titled as overheads.

- b. Boat fuel for the fishery actions (A5, D1) of P4 and P13 should be shifted from travel to consumables (see Annex 3.2 – ca. 9,000 respectively 15,000€)
- c. The ship fuel for bird count A.3 in Lithuania (P13) noted as consumable, originally planned in cooperation with P15 using its marine ship, must be changed into external assistance as another ship (more suitable for bird count) meanwhile is rented from an external service provider. It means that ca. 20,000€ must be shifted from consumables to external assistance and the personnel costs of P15 decrease slightly (ship crew).
- d. Computer consumables as noted for P3 for expensive software (Map info/Arc info licenses must be shifted to equipment (ca. 10,000€).

In one case **new technologies** change the technical description of the purchase and influence accompanying costs:

- For the A.4 action the satellite tags (consumables) to count seals are changed to GSM based technology and consequently the technical description of the product is changed. It is slightly more expensive (47,000 instead 45,000€), but does not require anymore the accompanying rent of a satellite channel as originally planned (18,000€ in external assistance), GSM service cost only 1,500€. However, in exchange it requires technical instructions by a contracted expert from the producer company (external assistance) to undertake the necessary programming of the GSM to computers and to instruct the team.

In one case a **new partner**, P20, was introduced (approved contract modification) and a budget should be allocated to him (personnel, travel, external assistance) – funds to be taken from the budget of the beneficiary (reallocation of costs).

For the following participants: Ben, P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P9, P13, P14, P18 between 2,000 and 5,000€ (see Annex 3.2) shall be allocated for various **international travel** (per partner, depending on project role) from the budget for local travel to project sites. Currently the following travel destinations within EU, and one travel to an Accession country (Croatia) are wished:

- 4-6 July, Plymouth (UK). Conference "Change in Aquatic Ecosystems: Natural and Human Influences 2007";
- 25-28, September, 2007, Murcia (Spain) "European Symposium on MPA's as a Tool for Fishery Management and Ecosystem Conservation";
- September 2007, Croatia, "Ichthyological Congress"
- October 2007, Helsinki (Finland): ICES annual conference on Fishery issues
- 30.10.- 4.11.2007, Barcelona (Spain): 31st Annual Meeting of the Waterbird Society
- Several Meetings (autumn/winter 2007/08) with Swedish and Finnish Marine Mammal experts in Stockholm respectively Helsinki

Meetings and conferences in 2008/09 cannot yet be foreseen with exact destination, but it is expected that European Marine N2000 sites will be discussed at several occasions and the Baltic LIFE project started to play an important role and should be represented with its core experts on habitats, birds, mammals and fishery as well as with its systematic management plan concept.

All travel will be recorded and presentations attached to the next reports.

#### **Detailed proposed revisions/changes by partner:**

##### **Beneficiary BEF LV**

The Beneficiary reduces its total budget by ca. 19,000€ and distributing these funds to other partners: P17 – 7,000€ for the conference in E.8 (external assistance), P15 - 1,600€ for contracting a lab for analysis of pollutants, which the partner cannot perform (external assistance) and P20 – new partner with 10,851€ budget, partly costs which were allocated for the beneficiary for the study visit to Germany, partly new costs (personnel).

The beneficiary reduces its travel costs by 12,451€ (most parts of the study visit to Germany due to cheaper flights and shift to P20 and local travel as meetings are organised in synergies). Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

Furthermore it reduces the position "other costs" by 16,000€ due to reduced audit costs (ca. 20,000€ less) in comparison to cost estimate. Inside the position "other costs", furthermore, 4,000€ must be increased at the position for the rent of project seminar room due to non-recoverable VAT (at date of application VAT was recoverable for Latvian LIFE projects).

Inside the position external assistance several positions shift to other partners (P20, P15, P17) and several service costs get upgraded due to non-recoverable VAT or are newly introduced based on experience from the project implementation so far. The position shall be upgraded to 122,550 EUR for the beneficiary, despite the shifts to others. Upgraded and new positions: posters (3,000€) on the project values to be positioned at local sites, e.g. schools, marine museums, municipality info-boards, for local stakeholder meetings (2,000 – A.7) for project car (3,000€ due to price increase as of non-recoverable VAT) and seminar services for partners/steering group meetings (by 2,000€ - due to VAT), for E.8 conferences a new position shall be included: honorary for speakers 3,000€ to meet the need for external expertise e.g. on EIA/Hab. Art 6 assessment for Marine sites and, last topping up the layman's report to national languages (to 6,000€ total costs for 4 languages incl. VAT).

In position Equipment 2,000€ shall be added for purchase of the Map Info software license for the management plans, as the team of the beneficiary will be more involved in the writing and data processing for the management plans as originally envisaged.

Detailed illustration of changes in revised budget proposal (see Annex 3.1 and 3.2).

### **P1 BEF EE**

Ca. 5,000€ shall be shifted from external assistance to personnel costs as a part of the management plans shall be elaborated by the partner's own staff and not by external experts.

14,000€ shall be shifted from travel (less costs for Germany study visit and for local travel due to synergies of meetings and use of other partner's cars) to: Equipment (2,500€ for a map info software license to produce the management plans and 500 € upgrade for printer quality) and to external assistance: 2,000€ for posters on the project values to be positioned at local sites, e.g. ferries, municipality info-boards, 2,000€ for stakeholder seminars (A.7), and 6,000€ for an additional seminar on the interlink between habitats Directive, WFD and CFP.

Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

The total budget of P1 raised by 3,500€ in exchange with P2 as for the change of seminar venue between A.2 (shifted from P2 to P1) and A.7 (shifted from P1 to P2) actions – reallocation of costs: 3,000€ for external assistance and 500€ for flights.

### **P2 BEF LT**

The total budget of P2 decreased by 3,500€ in exchange with P1 as for the change of seminar venue between A.2 and A.7 actions (– see Annex).

The travel position shall be reduced by 10,500€ (less costs for Germany study visit and for local travel due to synergies of meetings and use of other partner's cars) and the funds shifted to external assistance. Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

External assistance shall be upgraded for additional stakeholders meetings (2,000€), posters (2,000€) on the project values to be positioned at local sites, e.g. marine museum, municipality info-boards as well as 6,000€ for the projects round up meeting, which by mistake was not planned in original budget.

Furthermore P2 proposes to upgrade its position for equipment for three additional positions: 1,300€ for a camera lenses to produce project action photos in web quality and 700€ for a mobile info stand to accompany the stakeholder events and 1,000€ shall be added to equipment for computer spare parts which do not fall under consumables as being above the threshold and for software.

### **P3 EEIC**

Personnel position shall be upgraded by 600 € for rapidly increasing salaries – accordingly position "consumables" to be reduced by same amount as some maps can be received for free from other institutions. At the same time the positions for Arc info and Map info software licenses (ca. 10,000€) shall be shifted to equipment as they are above the threshold for being low value good.

#### **P4 EMI**

The partner is working with two different departments in the project; therefore the changes are illustrated according to the departments dealing with the actions around habitats (A.2, C.2, C.4) and fisheries (A.5, C.1, D.1).

For action C.2 the planned service contract for modelling of dump sites (14,400€, external assistance) shall be shifted to personnel fully, as the partner meanwhile has own personnel which can implement the task and does not external services.

For the fisheries related actions the partner wishes to reduce boat travel to sites - saving due to synergies of trips (by 5,000€), equipment – good price for netting materials (by 5,000€) and external assistance – fishermen are covering the labour themselves (by 4,000€) and increase by 14,000€ all positions in the budget for “consumables”. Reasoning: the partner discovered that due to the large amount of field work in the 3 actions he needs much more field consumables than estimated. The cost positions remain the same, but amount of each should increase. The car fuel placed in consumables shall be called “boat fuel” and the boat transport to sites allocated to travel position in the application shall be called “car transport to sites” – no change in figures but in description.

Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

Summarising the changes at the partner: personnel upgraded by 14,400€, travel reduced by 5,000€, external assistance reduced by 18,400€, equipment reduced by 5,000€ and consumables increased by 14,000€.

#### **P5 EOY**

Position external assistance shall be specified as: reduced rent of aeroplane for fewer hours of aerial bird count and introduction of a new vehicle: rent of ship (9,540€) in deeper waters of Western Saaremaa for ship counts. Total sum for the position remains unchanged.

Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

#### **P6 MIWA**

No changes/revisions.

#### **P7 NAF**

Shift of position external assistance (ship rent) fully to “travel” – fuel/oil costs per ship hour of the ship as the vehicle is meanwhile owned by the partner and cannot be sub-contracted, see explanation above.

#### **P8 LIAE**

The specification of consumables (“computer consumables” and “chemicals”) should be changed in “field work consumables”, “computer consumables” and “laboratory consumables” – the total sum remains unchanged.

Furthermore 10,000€ shall be moved from travel budget (travel to Estonian and Lithuanian sites for field work) and added to personnel costs. Reasoning: the A2 action team decided not to work throughout all A.2 action in cross national teams during all field works, but only to accompany each other for a few test cases, otherwise the logistics for equipment transportation and setting up of diving schedules would be too complicated. Therefore parts of the travel budget is free to cover increasing needs for personnel budget due to salary increases and additional labour needs for analysis of the samples of A.2 (more samples gathered due to good weather conditions than planned and consequently more laboratory time required). Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

#### **P9 LOB**

Equipment position shall be upgraded by 400 € for more expensive binoculars (better quality as advised during A.1 training) – accordingly position “consumables” to be reduced by same amount. Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

#### **P10 LATFRA**

No changes/revisions.

#### **P11 VFS**

Due to complexity of film scenarios the personnel costs shall be increased by 8,920€ for the script development team – accordingly position “travel” shall be reduced by the same amount, funds can be saved by boat transport provided by the other action teams taking the camera team on board during inventory actions.

#### **P12 SOPA**

No changes/revisions

#### **P13 EKOI**

As mentioned above ca. 20,000€ shall be moved from “consumables” to “external assistance” as a ship for off-shore bird counts in deep waters would get rented instead fuel paid due to contracting reasons and conditions from the donor.

The planned herring traps (12,000€, equipment) require a shift as well as an increase of budget: total funds needed for the herring traps would be 15,000€ (3,000€ from travel), however the herring traps cannot be purchased as “equipment” but must be produced and therefore the funds shall be distributed among “consumables” – 7,200€ for netting material – and “external assistance” – 7,800€ for the service to construct the traps according project needs.

Furthermore the travel position shall be further reduced as follows: 4,000€ shall be moved to personnel costs to cover the rapidly increasing salaries and 4,000€ shall be moved to equipment for a large format printer to produce the maps for the A.7 action (management plans, for state authorities and stakeholders) to better achieve the project objectives and illustrate the sites. Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena. The boat fuel for the fishery actions A5 and D1 shall be moved to consumables (ca. 9,000€).

Summarising the changes at the partner: personnel upgraded by 4,000€, travel reduced by 20,117€, external assistance upgraded by 28,156€, equipment reduced by 8,000€ and consumables reduced by 4,042€.

#### **P14 CORPI**

Due to purchase of a suitable survey ship by the partner institution, which can be used for the A.2 inventory and will free parts of the originally planned ship rent, we requests a shift from external assistance of 10,000€ to personnel, same as a shift of 4,000€ from travel to personnel. Personnel position shall be increased by 14,000€ due to shift from ship rent to paying the crew of the ship as personnel, furthermore due to increasing salaries as well as increasing work load: some habitats (like newly found moraine ridges) are very patchy and the partner has to increase spatial resolution of surveys and use additional methods depending on intermediate results – and this technique requires much more personal costs, as one hour in the sea afterwards results in one or more days work in the lab and for video analysis.

Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

#### **P15 CMR**

Due to the change of arrangements with ship for A,3 in Lithuania (ship will be rented externally from P13) the ship crew of P15 will not need so many sea days and shall therefore reduce its involvement. 2,000€ shall be shifted from personnel to travel as the partner is involving more experts in the C4 action and more meetings in Latvia are scheduled, for which travel budget planned is not sufficient. Another 4,500€ from the ship crew personnel costs shall be inside the personnel position shifted to expert and senior expert for increasing involvement in the action and more expertise which the partner can contribute.

Furthermore 1,600€ shall be allocated (from beneficiary’s position “other costs”) for external assistance of involving a laboratory for analysis of some samples of pollutants, which cannot be handled in the partner’s own lab. These costs were not foreseen but are necessary to reach the objective of action C.4 in Lithuania, same as the increased expert involvement.

**P16 BfN RU**

No changes/revisions.

**P17 BirdLife**

The seminar service costs (external assistance) of E.8 action (7,000€) shall be shifted from beneficiary to P17, as the partner has allocated its co-funding mostly for this position (no change in budget position, only re-allocation of approved costs to a different partner).

**P18 ESNCC**

Due to changes from satellite to GSM based technology the seal tags (consumables) are slightly more expensive than planned: 47,000 € instead 45,000€ and new technical description of the tag shall be defined as: Fastloc GPS/gsm tag. For this purpose 2,000€ shall be shifted from position “external assistance”.

Here the new technology reduces the costs of the rent of satellite channel from 18,000€ to 1,500€ for the GSM service. However additionally 7,500€ will be needed for special programming assistance (from UK). The remaining 7,000€ of the external assistance position shall be modified as contract for an external seal expert, as the 2nd senior expert involved in the project personnel is not any longer employed at the partner (became member of parliament after elections in EE). The project coordinator/senior expert No1 will take over parts of the planned works and additionally junior staff from the partner P18 will be involved, however, the external expert will be needed for 70 days a 100€ for the seal catching activities and data analysis as this cannot be delegated to junior staff. Due to change of employment mode only sub-contracting of this expert is possible no employment.

In total only 2,000€ must be shifted from External assistance to consumables, all other positions shall receive only internal change of description.

Some of travel budget shall be spend for international travel to add up on project visibility at international arena.

**P19 Metsahallitus**

No changes/revisions.

**P20 BfN DE**

The partner is newly introduced and shall have a budget of 3,283€ personnel costs (preparation of the study visit), 5,756€ travel costs (for travel of the study group in Germany, speakers travel) and 1,812 € external assistance (speakers honorary, seminar services). In total 10,851€ shall be allocated to this partner (re-allocated from beneficiary, P1 and P2).

## ANNEXES

**Annex 1: Project maps** (annexes given in italic font can be found in 1<sup>st</sup> progress report)

- *General map of project sites, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 1*
- Informative map for Stakeholders

**Annex 2: List of species and habitats investigated**

**Annex 3: Project schedule**

**Annex 4: Partners list, with addresses, from data base**

**Annex 5: Detailed information on Actions** (annexes given in italic font can be found in 1<sup>st</sup> progress report)

### 5.1. Detailed information on A Actions

**5.1.1. Detailed action report on A1** (action summary and major event reports)

- *Training activities and study visit to Germany, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A1*

**5.1.2. Detailed action report on A2** (action summary and major event reports)

- *1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop "Baltic LIFE Marine Habitat Seminar", see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A2*
- Workshop on "Methodology of underwater video analysis for habitat mapping"
- Guidelines for analysis of video materials

**5.1.3. Detailed action report on A3** (action summary and meeting report)

- Estonian and Latvian ornithologist meeting on project site EST/LAT 09 Irbe Strait
- Intermediate evaluation meeting on waterbird

**5.1.4. Detailed action report on A4** (action summary)

**5.1.5. Detailed action report on A5**

- *Methodological meeting, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A5*

**5.1.6. Detailed action report on A6** (action summary and meeting reports)

- *1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> expert meeting on actions A6 and A7, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*
- *Common database structure, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*

**5.1.7. Detailed action report on A7** (action summary and meeting reports)

- *Workshop "Concept development for management plans of marine protected areas", see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*
- *Concept of management plan development, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 2: A6/A7*
- Workshop "Stakeholders interests and involvement in management planning and management of marine protected areas"
- The system for evaluation of the species and habitats of conservation interest

### 5.2. Detailed information on B-D Actions

**5.2.1. Detailed action report on C1** (action summary)

**5.2.2. Detailed action report on C2** (action summary)

**5.2.3. Detailed action report on C2** (action summary)

**5.2.4. Detailed action report on C4** (action summary)

**5.2.5. Detailed action report on D1** (action summary)

### 5.3. Detailed information on E actions (action summary and major event reports)

(Annexes given in italic font can be found in 1<sup>st</sup> progress report)

- E Action summary
- *Project info leaflet (4 languages), see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 5: E1*
- *Concept on film clips, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 5: E3*
- Conceptual preparation meeting on International Bird conference
- Fishermen leaflet (3 languages)
- Screen shots from web page [www.balticseaportal.net](http://www.balticseaportal.net)

### 5.4. Detailed information on F actions (action summary and major event reports)

- F Action summary
- *1<sup>st</sup> Steering group meeting, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 6: F1*
- *1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Project partner's meetings, see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 6: F3*
- *Country coordination meetings, in EE(3), LV(3) and LT(3), see 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report: Annex 6: F4*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering group meeting
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Project partner's meetings
- Country coordination meetings in EE(2), LV(2)
- Beneficiary's contracts with partners (copies of contracts without annexes)
- Full versions of beneficiary's contracts with project partners, see in electronic format of INTERIM report - CD

## **Annex 6: Russian partner (P16) involvement**

## **Annex 7: Photos**