

Maritime Spatial Planning Country Profile

Estonia

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Disclaimer

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Last revision date

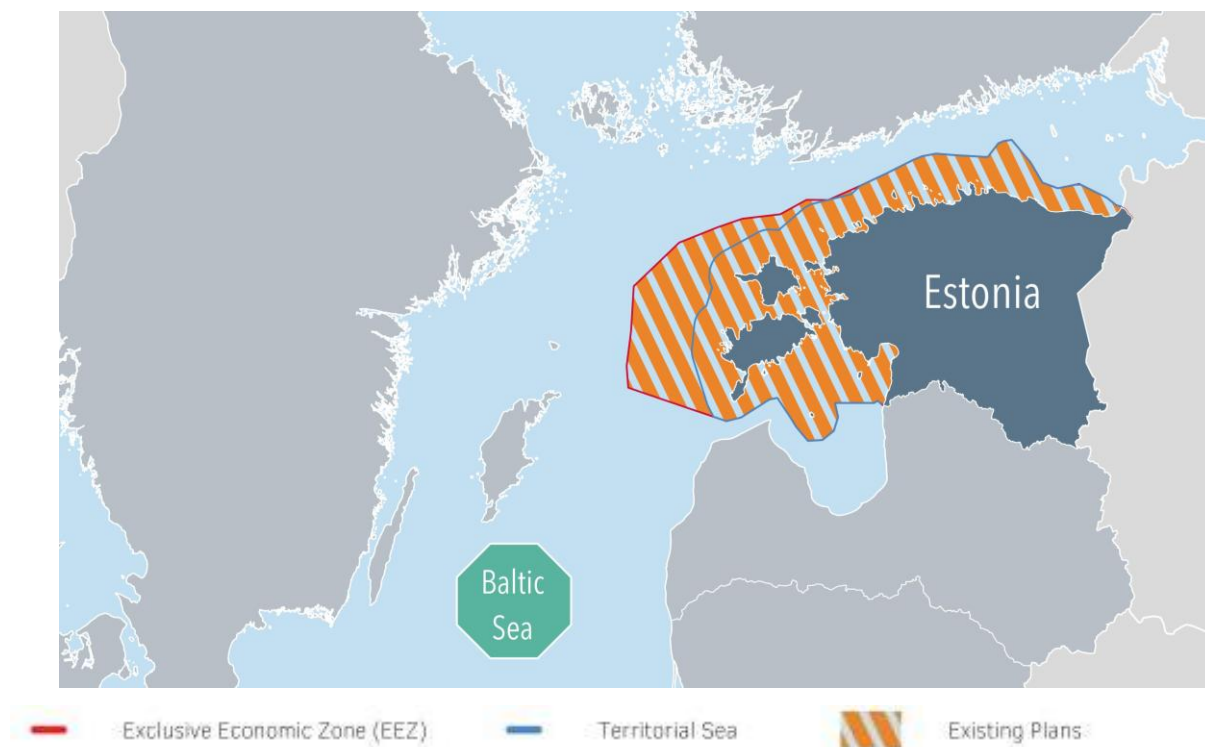
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Background information

Basic facts on Marine Waters



- Size of internal waters (to the baseline) and territorial sea (12-nm zone from the baseline) approximately 25 200 km².
- Exclusive economic zone about 11 300 km².
- Exclusive economic zone between Estonia and Russia is not agreed.

Overview of Maritime Spatial Planning-related uses and issues

The Estonian marine area is characterised by the following long-term trends:

1. Use of marine area has intensified
2. Improving the status of the marine environment requires close attention from all Baltic Sea countries.
3. New uses are emerging: renewable energy, aquaculture, infrastructure networks.
4. Traditional uses of the sea are diversifying. Potential permanent connections will affect passenger traffic. Recreational fishing and sailing are growing. The fishing sector is not a substantial employer, but it is an industry that values local resources. Recreational use is going to be more versatile.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General Information on Governance

Marine areas (internal waters, territorial sea) are public waters under the Water Act of Estonia, which means that marine areas are owned by the state. Local authorities do not have rights in the sea, including planning rights.

The national government has the responsibility to manage the Estonian EEZ. Estonia contains 79 local administrative units, including 15 cities and 64 rural municipalities.

Planning at the national level

- Planning on land and in Estonia's marine waters (EEZ, territorial sea, and inland waters) is based on the Estonian Planning Act, which is in force since July 2015, and an Order of the Government from October 2012. The two pilot MSP Plans are based on this Order. The national MSP process has been initiated on 25 May 2017.
- The UN Law of the Seas is implemented through national legislation in the Exclusive Economic Zone. National legislation includes specific sectoral laws, which are implemented in the EEZ.

National MSP authority

- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Land Use and Spatial Planning Policy Department: MSP coordination

Planning at the regional level

- Since 2010, two pilot MSP plans were implemented, driven by the growing interest for offshore energy. The MSP Projects stimulated the government in 2011 to begin an initiative to establish legal processes for creating MSP legislation and to start a real planning process. They have led to two legally binding county plans, adopted in 2016 (Hiiumaa Island) and 2017 (Pärnu Bay). However, in the Hiiumaa MSP, designation areas for offshore wind energy (OWE) were abolished by the National Court of Estonia on 8 August 2018. With regard to other topics, the Hiiumaa maritime spatial plan remains valid.

Regional MSP authority

- Until June 2015 it was the responsibility of the counties based on their terrestrial spatial planning responsibilities. Since Amendment of the Planning Act of 2015, MSP is developed at the national level.

General Information on Legislation

As of 1 July 2015, Estonia has a new Planning Act which also regulates maritime spatial planning. Based on this, national maritime spatial planning for Estonian marine areas (internal waters, territorial waters and EEZ) was initiated by the Government of Estonia on 25 May 2017. A procurement procedure for the planning and impact assessment consultancy was finalized in February 2018 and the private consulting company "Hendrickson & KO" is leading the development of national MSP.

The Planning Act makes a clear distinction between terrestrial planning and maritime spatial planning. Previously, maritime spatial planning was based on terrestrial planning and it was done at the county level as pilot projects. According to the new Planning Act, maritime spatial planning is carried out at the state level, as a thematic plan to the national plan.

The national maritime spatial plan covers both the territorial waters and the EEZ. Possible subjects to be covered in the MSP are infrastructure (energy, transport), providing sustainable use of fisheries, taking into account the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and describing measures for maintaining the good and healthy status of the environment. The maritime spatial plan will be a long-term national plan, which will give guidelines to different institutions in charge of granting permits and licences for the use of marine areas for different purposes, such as offshore energy, shipping, etc.

Before starting the national MSP process, Estonia had developed and adopted two legally binding county plans derived from two pilot projects. They remain in effect even after the adoption of the new Planning Act. These two pilot regional maritime spatial plans do not cover coastal terrestrial areas but view the area as functionally interlinked with the sea. Local governments must take requirements of the plan into account while planning on terrestrial areas.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is compulsory for the maritime spatial plan, according to the Planning Act in force since July 2015 and has been conducted for national MSP as well as for the Hiiumaa Island¹ and Pärnu Bay.²

General applicability (e.g. Territorial Sea, EEZ, other distinctions)

The Planning Act - in force since July 2015 - also applies to the EEZ (in addition to internal waters and territorial sea). The new Planning Act makes a clear distinction between terrestrial planning and maritime spatial planning.

¹ <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/hiiumaa-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering> . However, in the Hiiumaa MSP offshore wind energy (OWE) was abolished by the National Court of Estonia on August 8th 2018, all other sector-related aspects are still legally binding.

² <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/parnu-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering>

Maritime Spatial Plans

Progress

A new Planning Act entered into force in July 2015 upon which the current national maritime spatial plan for Estonian marine areas (internal waters, territorial waters and EEZ) was initiated on 25th May 2017. In April 2018 the initial outline of the Estonian MSP and the memorandum of interest to conduct impact assessment was sent for consultation to ministries, agencies, local governments and environmental NGOs and asked for proposals for an outline and impact assessment, including the intention to develop the SEA. This included neighbouring countries, although it was not based on an official Espoo consultation. Public discussions took place between May and June 2018. The first MSP draft was published in May 2019 and public and transboundary consultations were held in the summer of 2019. A transboundary consultation meeting was held in Tallinn on 29 May 2019. Finland, Latvia and Sweden national authorities and agencies provided their formal comments and proposals on the draft plan.

In February-March 2020, Estonia published the main solution and impact assessment report nationally and received a lot of feedback to the plan. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 the national public hearings and transboundary consultations for the plan were postponed. The main solution and impact assessment were amended in response to the feedback and published nationally again in July 2020. The national public hearings were held in August 2020. In September 2020, the transboundary consultation on the Estonian MSP main solution and impact assessment report (including SEA) began. A transboundary consultation virtual meeting was also held on 23 September 2020.

From January to April 2021, the Ministry of Finance, then the national MSP authority, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, tried to find a suitable solution to the strong opposition the plan received from fishermen. Given that both fishing and energy are state interests, it was essential that a compromise was found. Thus, the Government made an interim decision to leave some of the suitable offshore wind energy areas on hold until the year of 2027. These reserve areas overlap with the most intensive fishing areas. This will provide the fishermen with assurance that their situation will not change until 2027, when the situation will be evaluated again.

The last disclosure took place November -December 2021. At that time an informal transboundary meeting was also held to give the Baltic countries the opportunity to become acquainted with the very final solution. The plan was distributed to the Government for adoption in February 2022. The plan was adopted on 12 May 2022 by the [Government decree No 146](#).

Timeline of the MSP process:

ACTION	DEADLINE	INCLUDED
Asking for proposals for outline and impact assessment, including the intention to develop the SEA	November 2018 – January 2019	Neighbouring countries (not the official Espoo consultation)
Disclosure of proposals for outline and impact assessment, including the intention to develop the SEA	January 2019	
Preparation of the draft planning solution and impact assessment, including the SEA report	July 2018 – March 2019	
Publishing the draft reports on the planning solution and impact assessment, including the SEA draft report	April 2019 – June 2019	Neighbouring countries (Espoo consultation)
Preparation of the main planning solution	July 2019 – March 2020	
Second publishing of the draft reports on the main planning solution and impact assessment, including the SEA draft report	March 2020 – November 2020 ³	Neighbouring countries (Espoo consultation)
Coordination of the report on the planning solution and impact assessment, including the SEA report	May 2021 - October 2021	
Disclosure of the report on the planning solution and impact assessment, including the SEA report	November-December 2021	Notifying neighbouring countries, also informal transboundary meeting held in December 2021
Distributing the finalised plan to Government for decision	February 2022	
Adopting the plan	12 May 2022	

Existing Maritime Spatial Plan

The Estonian government adopted its national MSP on 12 May, 2022. The Estonian MSP is a strategic spatial development document on the national level, which plans the basic developments in marine space for the next 15 years or so. Therefore, the plan focuses on the principles of spatial development, and the activities are not planned on a detailed scale. The plan provides guidelines and states conditions for the next stages of planning for the activities, including at the local government level. The adopted MSP serves as a basis for decision-making by various ministries and agencies and also guides the activities of businesses, investors, local governments, and coastal communities. The MSP must be taken into account during the preparation of subsequent plans, in the admission of permits for different uses and when drafting the national and local government's strategic development documents.

The planning solution was drafted on the basis of environmental considerations and the best available knowledge. The inclusion of the best available knowledge is ensured by a broad-based expert group, cooperation with other countries, authorities and stakeholders, and further studies appropriate to the planning level.

The long-term vision is: The Estonian marine area has a good environmental status, diverse and balanced use, and promotes the sustainable growth of a blue economy. Blue economy includes all areas related to the sea: tourism, renewable energies, aquaculture, fisheries, biotechnology, use of seabed mineral resources, etc.

The national MSP is developed according to the following principles:

1. The Estonian marine area is characterised by synergistic combined use.
2. The use of the marine area must be diversified, favouring activities that are more suited to the region.
3. The marine area is used as a public good, including through ecosystem services.
4. Marine area related decisions are knowledge-based.
5. There is effective cooperation and communication between states, authorities and stakeholders in decision-making on the use of the marine area.

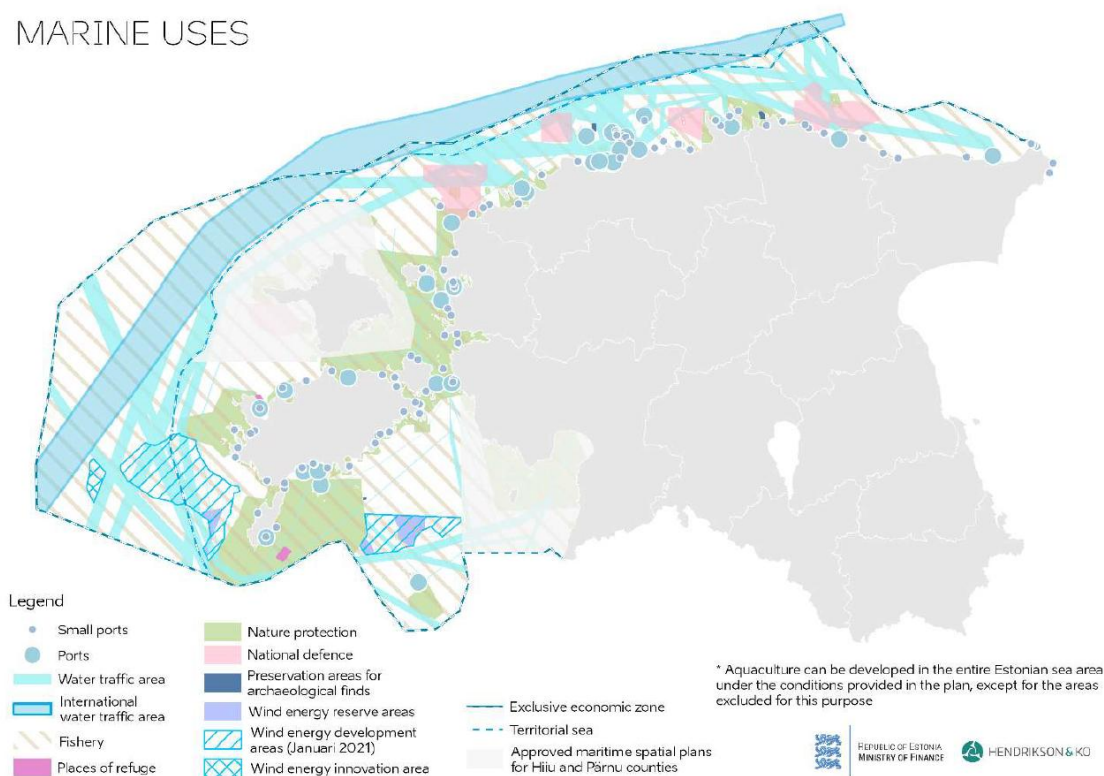
Estonian MSP addresses the following sectors:

1. Fisheries.
2. Aquaculture (fish farming, shellfish and algae farming,
3. Maritime transport (Vessel traffic, Ports, Ice roads)
4. Maritime rescue, pollution response and guarding the state border
5. Renewable energy production

³ Public process paused during March 2020-June 2020 because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

6. Seabed infrastructure (transmission networks)
7. Sea tourism and recreation
8. Protected natural objects
9. Marine culture
10. Cultural monuments
11. National defence
12. Mineral resources
13. Dumping

MARINE USES



The Estonian MSP presents guidelines and conditions for each of the sectors listed above. Following of the guidelines is desirable and based on the long-term vision and the needs for the combined use of the marine area. Compliance with the guidelines will be monitored by the authority responsible for the area. Deviations from the guidelines must be made in collaboration with other involved or affected parties to ensure the planning solution is implemented in full. The conditions are requirements set by the plan, the compliance with which is mandatory.

Maps that present zoning of different activities and marine sea uses are available from the webmap service: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6f58b9a06a994e7bb76e0c1262f932d3/>.

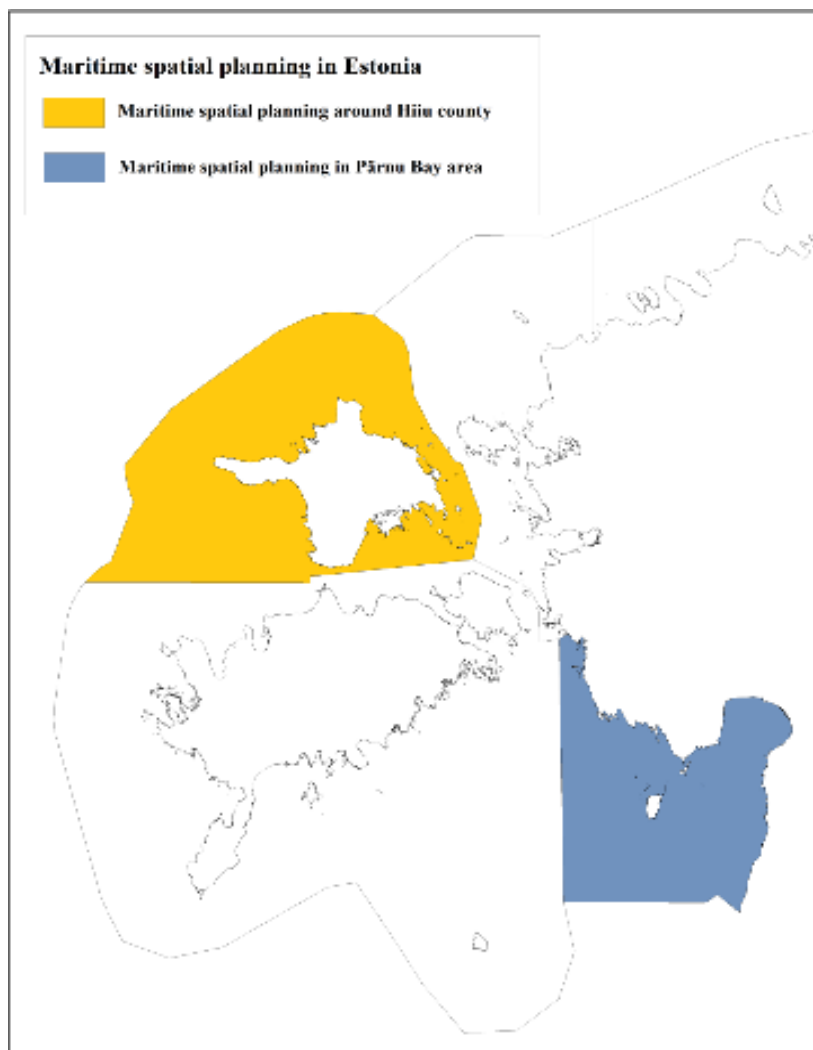
[An Action Plan](#) for the implementation of the MSP is attached as a separate annex. The Action Plan includes proposals for improvements to best practices and the legal frameworks that have emerged throughout the planning process, as well as studies, analyses and follow-up actions needed for sustainable use of the maritime areas. When carrying out implementation activities, consideration should always be given to whether a relevant impact assessment is also necessary.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan and the implementation of the MSP, it is recommended to set up a working group/task force on the implementation of the MSP, composed of representatives of the ministries and agencies responsible for the sectors. The aim is not to duplicate the work of the working groups that have been set up to date, but to facilitate the implementation of the plan and to promote cooperation between the different areas covered by the plan (including between the working groups).

Pilot plans

The Estonian MSP was drawn up on the basis of the experience obtained from drafting the MSPs for the marine areas of Hiiu and Pärnu counties. The solution for the spatial plans of the marine areas of Hiiu and Pärnu counties have been taken into account in the development of this solution and in the impact assessment.

In October 2012 the Government of Estonia initiated two pilot maritime spatial plans – at the area around Hiiu Island and Pärnu Bay area. The Hiiu pilot was adopted in 2016. The Pärnu Bay pilot was adopted in April 2017. After the enactment of the nation-wide maritime spatial plan, the Hiiu and Pärnu maritime spatial plans will remain valid.



Map: Pilot MSP areas initiated by the Government of Estonia in October 2012.

Maritime Spatial Plan 1: Hiiu Island⁴

The plan was adopted in July 2016⁴. The plan contains the following sectors:

- Shipping
- Ports
- Fishing
- Offshore renewable energy production
- Aquaculture
- Tourism (incl. recreation and sports)
- Under water cultural heritage
- Nature protection
- Military
- Submarine cables and pipelines

⁴ In the Hiiu MSP offshore wind energy (OWE) was abolished by the National Court of Estonia on August 8th 2018, all other sector-related aspects are still legally binding.

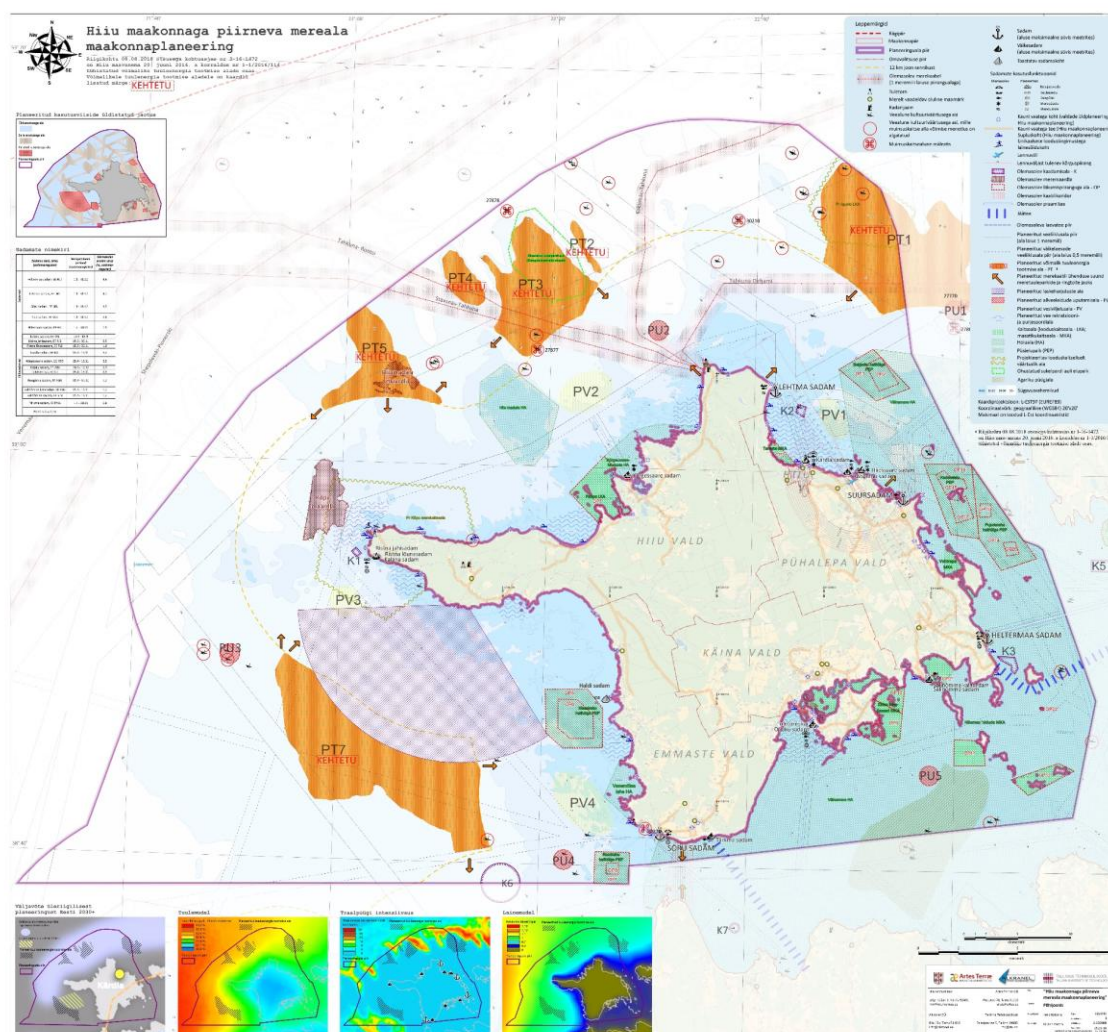
Legal basis

Estonian Planning Act and Order of the Estonian Government, from 12 October 2012.

Legal impact

The plan was adopted in accordance with the Planning Act and is a legally binding county plan. It will stay in force even after the adoption of the new Planning Act. It will be included in the national plan for Estonian marine areas initiated in 2017.

Area covered



Source : <https://planeeringud.ee/plank-web/#/planning/detail/10100120>

- Internal waters and territorial sea around Hiiu island (marine areas around Hiiu County)
- Size of the area: 3 786,3 km².

Historic development

Part of the area of the Hiiu island pilot project was initially covered in the BaltSeaPlan project. This meant that by 2012, when the legal process for maritime spatial planning was initiated, the first steps of the planning process, i.e. stocktaking, conflict analysis and identification of future uses, were already completed.

In 2012 the actual planning process started. In late 2014, the county governor approved the Hiiu island maritime spatial plan and as of September 2015 it is being supervised by the Ministry of Finance. The planning proposal has been developed in close cooperation with different national authorities (ministries, etc.), stakeholders (energy sector, fisheries, etc.) and local communities (local governments).

Objectives of the plan

The main objective of the plan is to define the long-term uses of the assigned marine area through a public process, taking into account the different economic, social, cultural and environmental interests and needs. To achieve this, more specific aims are set in the plan, such as the development of a port network, development of an electricity grid and the sustainable use of marine resources.

Designated uses / areas

There are three different areas determined in the plan: general use areas, priority use areas and restriction areas.

- General use areas are open for any use as long as it is in accordance with the law.
- Priority use areas means that one use has a priority over other uses. For example, in case of a priority use for aquaculture, aquaculture must be favoured against other uses.
- Restriction areas means that only one use is allowed in the area and all other uses are restricted. For example, marine protected areas are restriction areas. The restrictions may be temporary or have certain conditions or limitations (seasonality, etc.).

Planning regulations

The plan outlines general guidelines for the use of marine areas. Permits for specific uses will be issued, taking into account the conditions set in the plan and the prevailing legal restrictions.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A SEA has been carried out for the Hiiu island maritime spatial plan. During the process, no possible transboundary effects have been identified, which means that transboundary consultations were not carried out in the planning process.

Public Participation

According to the Estonian Planning Act, all plans, including maritime spatial plans, must be made public throughout the process. This means that the wider public as well as any stakeholder has the right to express their opinion about the plan in every phase of the planning process. In addition, compulsory public displays and discussions are held in different stages of the planning process.

In Hiiu Island, representatives approached stakeholders and they were invited to take part in the group leading the development of the MSP Plan. The planning process was led by a steering board, which included members from different national authorities, different stakeholders (energy, fisheries) and local communities.

Transboundary Consultation

As the SEA process did not identify any transboundary effects, no transboundary consultations were carried out.

Harmonisation with other plans

The Hiiu island maritime spatial plan will be taken into account when developing a new terrestrial county plan for Hiiu Island (it was adopted in March 2018) and in local level plans, mainly in the comprehensive plans of local governments. Furthermore, the Hiiu Island maritime spatial plan will also be taken into account in the national maritime spatial plan. The Hiiu Island plan will be one part of the national plan.

Monitoring & Review

According to the new Planning Act, county plans (which include the Hiiu Island maritime spatial plan) are evaluated every five years from their adoption.

Electronic resources

All documents are available at <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/hiiu-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering>

Maritime Spatial Plan 2: Pärnu Bay area

The Pärnu Bay area plan includes consideration of the conflict between offshore energy and fisheries and offshore energy and local communities (Kihnu Island). Kihnu Island's cultural space and traditions are listed as UNESCO's Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The plan was adopted in April 2017.

The adopted plan, April 2017.

Source: <https://planeeringud.ee/plank-web/#/planning/detail/10100041>

Historic development

Part of the area of the Pärnu Bay area pilot project was initially covered in the BaltSeaPlan project. This means that in 2012, when the legal process for maritime spatial planning was initiated, the first steps of the planning process, i.e. stocktaking, conflict analysis and identification of future uses, were already completed. In 2012 the actual planning process started. In September 2015, the plan was ready for public discussions and was finally adopted in April 2017.

The Pärnu Bay area maritime spatial plan was developed with participation of stakeholders in a public way, in contrast to Hiiu Island where stakeholders were invited directly to participate in the leading MSP group. Numerous meetings have been held in a time span of 2 years with representatives from fisheries, the energy sector, maritime transport and ports, environmental organizations and local communities. In addition to stakeholder meetings, the stakeholder involvement process was discussed in a steering group, which gave input to the country governor on planning solutions.

Objectives of the plan

The main objective of the plan is to define the long-term uses of the assigned marine area through a public process, taking into account the different economic, social, cultural and environmental interests and needs. To achieve this, scenarios on the long-term development of the area have been developed. Eventually, a balanced use scenario was chosen featuring a sustainable use of the Pärnu Bay area through sustainable fishing, protection of culturally and naturally important areas, safe shipping routes and diverse recreation possibilities.

Designated uses / areas

There are two different areas determined in the plan: general use areas and priority use areas.

General use areas are open for any use as long as it is in accordance with the law.

Priority use areas means that one use has a priority over other uses. Other uses are allowed as long as they do not interfere with the priority use. For example, in case of a priority use for aquaculture, aquaculture must be favoured against other uses.

Planning Regulations

The plan spells out general guidelines for the use of marine areas. Permits for specific uses will be issued taking into account the conditions set in the plan and the prevailing legal restrictions.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A SEA has been carried out for the maritime spatial plan for the Pärnu Bay area.

Public Participation

According to the Estonian Planning Act, all plans, including maritime spatial plans, must be made public throughout the process. In Pärnu, stakeholders were invited to participate in a more public way – everyone who wanted could participate at every meeting.

Transboundary Consultation

The SEA process was carried out as a transboundary process with Latvia. At the very beginning of the process, Latvia was informed of the planning process and the SEA. The SEA results and the plan were presented to Latvia after the planning proposal was drafted.

Harmonisation with other plans

The Pärnu Bay area maritime spatial plan was taken into account when putting together a new terrestrial county plan for Pärnu County (adopted in March 2018) and in local level plans, mainly comprehensive plans.

Furthermore, the Pärnu Bay area maritime spatial plan will also be taken into account in the national maritime spatial plan. The Pärnu Bay area plan will be one part of the national plan.

Monitoring & Review

According to the new Planning Act, county plans (which include the Pärnu Bay maritime spatial plan) are evaluated every five years from their adoption.

Electronic resources

All documents are available at <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/parnu-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering>

MSP data is observable from portal <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d6b9a90f3462481e93acfaf4010f0e5e/>.

Aspects of the MSP process



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

The methodological approach to planning is characterised by an ecosystem-based approach which emphasises the functioning of ecosystems and values broad-based expertise in both the know-how and interests involved. The solution was developed based on various baseline studies and marine values mapped in the public discussions that took place in the coastal counties in June 2018. Values and interests, as well as existing usage and new directions, were brought together in a draft solution that was discussed with stakeholders and impact assessment experts.

The Estonian Maritime Spatial Plan Approach mentions that the planning must take into account the risk factor for the marine area and cumulative effects. It also states that the planning solution was drafted on the basis of environmental considerations and the best available knowledge. All traditional and new activities must be considered with an environmental approach in order to maintain a good environmental status.

The most significant negative anthropogenic impacts on the Baltic Sea are eutrophication, chemical pollution, overfishing of marine biological resources, and the spread of alien species. Particularly sensitive areas of the Baltic Sea are closed or shallow areas with limited water exchange. Poor environmental status has significant negative economic impact on, for example, the maritime tourism-related economic sector, fisheries and aquaculture, and can lead to an eventual deterioration in human health and well-being.

The Pärnu County Marine Plan is based on the paradigm of the ecosystem approach and the principle that humans can use the sea sustainably for a very long time. More specifically it states that the sea is ecologically clean and valuable, and is a location for sustainable fishing, tourism, nature and shipping routes. Implementing EBA helps to achieve good environmental status (GES) and sustainable use of marine resources.



Resilience of climate change impacts

Some references to climate change are made in the Estonian MSP. This phenomenon is considered because related circumstances could have a negative economic impact on marine tourism, fishing, aquaculture and human health. The impact assessment report states that: *"The implementation of the Maritime Spatial Plan will have a direct positive impact on climate change. The introduction of the planned wind energy development areas in Estonia would significantly increase the total production of renewable energy."*

The Estonian MSP also makes reference to the "Basic Principles of Climate Policy until 2050" which aims to have a gradual increase in the use of renewable energy sources in all sectors of final consumption. Estonia's National Energy and Climate Plan hopes to reach 42% of total final energy consumption (~50% of final energy consumption) from renewable energy by 2030. According to the Communication "National Energy and Climate Plan 2030", which specifies and complements the Energy Roadmap 2030, the offshore wind potential is 7000 MW. A new Energy Policy Development Plan is being prepared and is expected to come into force in December 2025. It sets new targets - from 2030, 100% of Estonia's annual domestic electricity consumption will be produced from renewable sources.

In the Pärnu Bay area pilot, isohypses of 3 m from the shore are presented to mark the possible sea water level elevation in the case of climate change. This area has to be taken into more consideration in local level plans.



Land-sea interactions

The Estonian MSP provides guidance on the planning of land areas for national designated spatial plans, comprehensive and designated spatial plans of local governments and detailed spatial plans. Land-sea interactions are specified in the main plan by setting the guidelines and conditions for development. The following topics should be considered during the preparation of the comprehensive plan, taking into account the specific local circumstances and the spatial development principles set by the comprehensive plan:

1. Ports and maritime transport
2. Maritime recreational activities.

In order to increase the recreational use of the sea, attention should be paid on the local level to the use of public beaches, sailing and powerboating sites, recreational areas, and public accesses to the sea.

The beach-based activities are planned based on the spatial development needs of the local government in the comprehensive plan. The planning of recreational activities can be based on the baseline analyses made in the context of the MSP

3. Protection of marine culture.

The preservation and viability of marine culture depend, to a large extent, on local interests and values. It is expedient to pay attention to the value of marine culture in the comprehensive plans of the local governments of the coastal area.

4. Cable corridors for offshore wind farms

The operation of offshore wind farms requires real space onshore as well for cable corridors. It is useful for local authorities to consider including a condition in the comprehensive plan, according to which infrastructures related to the activities at sea will be planned in sensitive land areas through public planning and design processes where appropriate.

5. National defence

6. Permanent Connections

7. Viability of coastal areas.

Coastal areas are home to communities carrying diverse marine cultures-in addition to coastal fishermen, there are also surfers, sailors, birdwatchers, etc. In order to preserve the different values of marine culture, it is important to agree on synergies at the local level, e.g., in the context of the comprehensive planning process, taking into account local specificities.

Marine culture mapping has been carried out in the framework of the MSP, where the most important keywords are drawn up by countries, which may be helpful in the preparation of comprehensive plans.

In the Pärnu Bay MSP, for example, the following issues list functional interactions that need to be taken into account:

1. Access needed to the sea. In case the access is missing it should be planned with consideration of the terrestrial spatial plans (county plan, municipality plan or detailed plan).
2. Port locations. The port area involves both land and the marine area that is part of the port infrastructure.
3. Potential support for search and rescue. MSP does not plan the search and rescue procedure as search and rescue operations are usually carried out from the ports.
4. Nature conservation areas that cover both the marine and land area.
5. 3 m contour line on land. This is an indicative maximum altitude to which sea level can possibly rise taking into account weather conditions and long-term possible climate change impact.



Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders are involved in MSP through ad-hoc stakeholder groups, conferences and workshops, online public consultation, and formal comment procedures. According to the Estonian Planning Act, all plans, including maritime spatial plans, must be made public throughout the process. A dedicated website was created providing information in Estonian and English. The presentations, minutes of the public meetings are published on the website as well. A short, animated video was created to explain maritime spatial planning.

During the Estonian's process of developing MSP at a regional level, active stakeholder involvement was fostered. Two webpages have been created for open sharing of information on both regional pilot MSPs. They have been used for stakeholder involvement but are not available anymore.

Stakeholder groups are partially opposing the MSP and are participating actively to protect their interests (see 2.2). Key stakeholders are environmental NGOs (who have been the main initiators for MSP) as well as fishermen. Another important group of stakeholders are the wind energy developers who would like to proceed with the building of offshore wind farms. In Estonia, some areas have already been identified for offshore wind farms. However, there is a need for these areas to be

designated in the MSP plans. Fishermen and water sports organisations have been very active in the process as the latter activities are likely to conflict with the other sea uses.

Stakeholder involvement has been carried out in a similar way to the terrestrial planning without any greater attempt to involve the wider audience. The planners' team has approached more local people living in Pärnu or Hiiumaa. No research or studies on implemented methods for the involvement of the general public on MSP have been published.



Combined or multi-use of space

During the creation of the Estonian MSP, a synergy between the existing marine uses and the planned activities has been addressed. The plan promotes for example a safer coexistence of traditional and new marine cultures, as well as the coexistence of various recreational uses of the marine environment.

'Combined use' is a term used in the Estonian MSP meaning the conscious joint use of the marine area within a single marine space, in geographical proximity. The term covers both the location of activities in the same sea area and the use of the same infrastructure. Guidelines are provided for all areas of activity to accommodate all different uses in the marine space.

Estonia has included the following combined or multi-uses:

- 1) Tourism, fisheries and environmental protection
- 2) Tourism, underwater archaeological heritage, and protection of the environment
- 3) Tourism and aquaculture
- 4) Wind energy and tourism
- 5) Wind Energy and Fisheries
- 6) Wind energy and aquaculture.

The co-existence of uses is favourable in the Hiiumaa and Pärnu Bay area pilot MSPs. In both plans, the leading principle is that uses should co-exist, if their co-existence is possible or no measures for mitigation exist for the cumulative effects of these uses in a certain marine area.



Trans-boundary cooperation

States shall ensure transboundary cooperation between Member States of the European Union when they establish their Maritime Spatial Plan (Article 6 of the *Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning*).

The third and final transboundary consultation for the draft Estonian MSP took place in 2020. The final transboundary meeting took place on 23 September 2020.

Another transboundary meeting was organised on 15 December 2021 with the aim of introducing the neighbouring countries to the revisions of MSP and to explain how the comments received from the neighbouring countries have been taken into account.

The Estonian Ministry of Finance participates actively in the HELOCM-VASAB MSP WG which deals with MSP issue in a transboundary context. Transboundary cooperation is strengthened also by participation in EU and Interreg transnational and cross-border projects, e.g. Capacity4MSP, Baltic Scope, Pan Baltic Scope, Baltic Lines.

The Pärnu MSP was elaborated partly in collaboration with the Latvian administration, as it was financially supported by a Estonian-Latvian cross-border cooperation programme



Use of best available data

The use of best knowledge and data for the preparation of the MSP is ensured by the cooperation of a broad-based group of specialists, cooperation with other countries, agencies and interest groups.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Estonian MSP is based on the MSFD and as an example, the establishment of a network of marine protected areas in the Estonian EEZ has been proposed according to the Directive.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

In the MSP, land areas are defined through their functional interactions, the so-called land-sea interactions. The MSP provides guidance on the planning of land areas for national designated spatial plans, comprehensive and designated spatial plans of local governments and detailed spatial plans. Land-sea interactions were specified in the main planning solution.

The above-mentioned pilot regional MSP plans do not cover coastal terrestrial areas but view the area as functionally interlinked with the sea. Maritime spatial plans do not set any legally binding terms for the land areas.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Impact assessment of MSP is integrated into the MSP process. A Memorandum of Intention to Conduct Impact Assessment and Initial Planning Outline for the Estonian MSP was adopted at an early stage of the development of national MSP. The Estonian MSP went beyond the traditional SEA process and carried out a comprehensive impact assessment, integrating the social, cultural and economic impacts to the assessment.

The comprehensive impact assessment of the MSP has analysed the significant and common impacts of the implementation of the plan, which for some reason needed to be assessed when the plan was being prepared. Proposals to prevent and reduce significant environmental impacts and recommendations for the consideration of environmental measures for further development and implementation of the planning solution have been made by various environmental sectors. The Assessment was based on existing marine studies and expert analyses (during the planning process, a number of marine space analyses were carried out to map sensitive areas). This Impact Assessment has already proposed, at a strategic level, the avoidance of more important wildlife sensitive areas on the basis of the prevention and the precautionary principles. The impact assessment has been carried out, taking into account the degree of accuracy of the planning document and the extent of its content. In cases where marine wildlife mapping needs to be refined, and the impact of the proposed activity depends on technical solutions, it was suggested that, in terms of the planning, relevant studies should be specified or further conducted in the licensing stage to ensure substantial marine ecosystems and the condition of the marine environment are maintained.

The main conclusion is that no adverse impacts from the implementation of the spatial plan are foreseen, taking into account the conditions and guidelines set out in the plan and the environmental measures provided in this Impact Assessment for the spatial planning and future licensing levels.

The report from the impact assessment including SEA process is available at: <https://riigiplaneering.ee/en/maritime-spatial-plan/maritime-spatial-plans/estonian-maritime-spatial-plan>.

Environment Impact Assessment is compulsory for all major offshore activities.

Sources

Consulted references

Estonia HELCOM-VASAB Country Fiche, March, 2025 https://vasab.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Country-fiche_EE_Mar2025.pdf

Estonian MSP process and draft MSP at <https://riigiplaneering.ee/en/maritime-spatial-plan/maritime-spatial-plans/estonian-maritime-spatial-plan>.

Relevant legislative acts

- MSP Directive:
Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning (OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 135–145).

<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/89/oj>

- Planning Act:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/522122015001/consolide>
 - Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management System Act:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/509022016002/consolide>
 - Water act http://faolex.fao.org/cgi-bin/faolex.exe?rec_id=003111&database=faolex&search_type=link&table=result&lang=eng&format_name=@ERALL
 - Law Enforcement Act:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/516062015011/consolide>
 - General Part of the Environmental Code: Act:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517062015001/consolide>
 - General Part of the Economic Activities Code Act:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/527032015008/consolide>
 - Building Code:
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/511082015002/consolide>
 - The Pärnu County Maritime Spatial Plan: <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/parnu-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering>
The Hiiu County Maritime Spatial Plan: <https://riigiplaneering.ee/mereala-planeeringud/hiiu-maakonnaga-piirneva-mereala-maakonnaplaneering>
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