



Recommendations for cross-border collaboration

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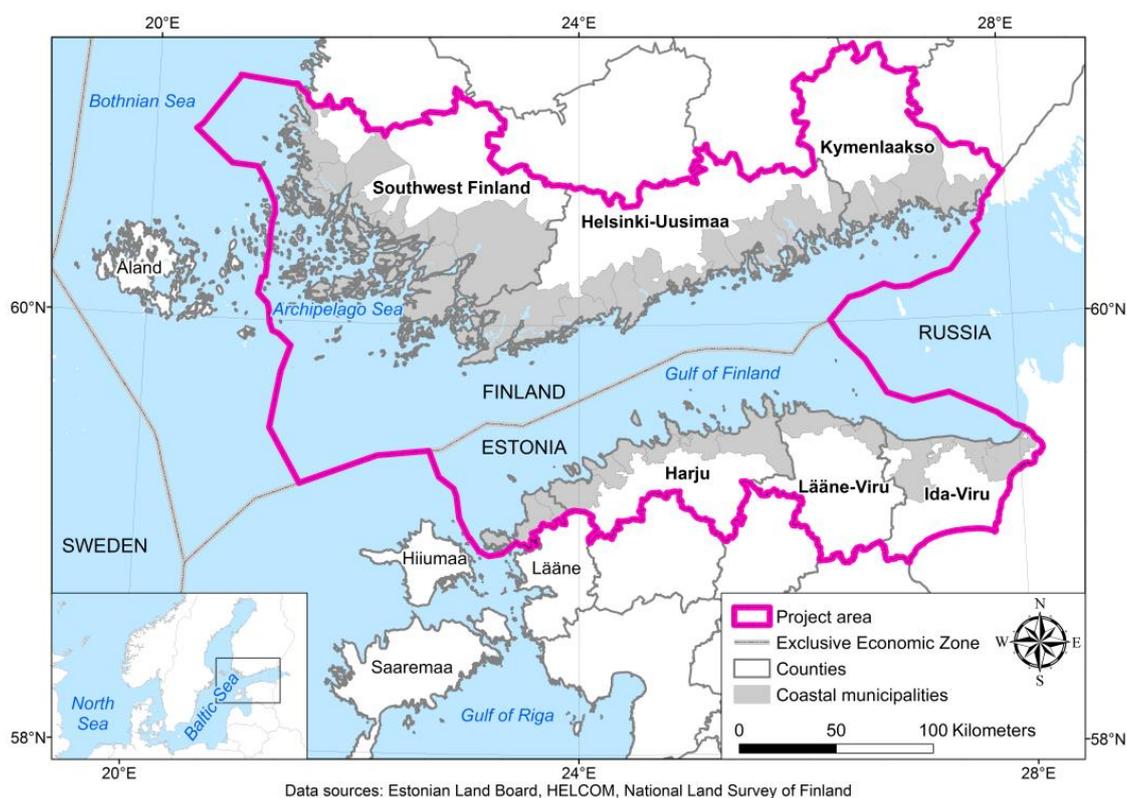


Introduction

These recommendations summarise key findings on cross-border collaboration. The topic of cross-border collaboration was discussed during the project in two workshops that were organized in December 2017 and January 2019 for relevant authorities in Estonia and Finland. We organized also two dedicated sessions on cross-border collaboration at the final conference of Plan4Blue in June 2019. The project conducted also three cross-border case studies [on shipping](#), [pelagic fishing](#) and [Natura 2000 network](#). In addition, we [reviewed literature](#) on cross-border collaboration in spatial in both marine and terrestrial contexts.

In these recommendations we raise key points with special relevance for the project area, but we feel that they can be applicable also beyond the project area. The first of the recommendations highlight the importance of sharing information, the second brings up the importance of learning and long-term cyclical nature of MSP. The last of the recommendations suggests practical means of organizing collaboration.

Target groups for these recommendations: MSP planners (and other regional planners), decision makers, stakeholders.



Map 1. Plan4Blue project area.

Exchange of information is the main purpose of cross-border collaboration

For successful collaboration and to avoid unnecessary problems it is essential to know how the neighbouring countries have organised MSP and what they are aiming at. In Finland there are several MSP planning areas and also other marine planning levels. This should be taken into account in cross-border collaboration also within Finland. Through collaboration and regular communication countries should share information on:

- Basic characteristics of the plans
 - Planning areas, spatial scales, temporal planning horizons
 - Binding or non-binding nature of the plans
 - Status of MSP in the national planning system
- Planning priorities, including information:
 - Sectors and topics that are addressed in plans and how MSP can steer or influence them.
 - The level of details how sectors and topics are addressed. Also whether there are in the plan or in the background documents.
- MSP procedures
 - Responsible authorities
 - Progress and timing of MSP process
 - Publication of different documents and draft plans
 - Consultation periods and stakeholder hearings
- It is also useful to inform the neighbours about delays, obstacles and limitations that have been met
- MSP related R&D projects that are launched to support planning processes

Countries are developing data sets to support planning and establishing national data portals that utilize Web Map Service (WMS) or other data standards. When possible, such data should be made available to neighbouring countries. HELCOM data portal and the new BASEMAPS platform could be used for this.

The first planning cycle is a learning process

We should utilise the opportunity of sharing experiences and learning from each other. Such learning should take place during planning processes, but soon after the first round of MSP planning there is particularly useful period to assess the planning and share experiences. This assessment should pay attention also to how cross-border collaboration was conducted. The main purpose is to conduct the next planning cycle better both in national and cross-border perspectives.

Countries should share experiences on:

- Challenges that were met related to, for instance:
 - Background information and availability of data
 - Stakeholder involvement
 - Making stakeholders and sectors to understand what MSP is and what it is not.
- On the solutions that were developed

Implementation phase of the plans lasts several years, during which countries monitor implementation of the plans. Towards the end of the planning cycle countries will evaluate and review the plans. Monitoring and evaluation can produce knowledge that is useful and relevant also for the neighbours.

- Countries should create a mechanism or process for sharing with their neighbours what they have learned from implementation and review phases of the plans
- Countries can also jointly investigate the possibility to collaborate in implementation of the plans, especially regarding sectors that operate across borders

Collaborate in formal and informal fora

It is important to utilize both formal and informal forms of collaboration. Informal meetings between planners – and importantly with stakeholders from different sectors – allow exchange of ideas and detailed discussions on planning practices and topics. Informal collaboration provides an environment for mutual learning. There can be situations that need formal decisions to be effectively solved. There are also formal procedures that countries need to follow, for instance consultation on cross-border environmental impacts (Espoo consultation).

Countries should utilize the existing platforms for collaboration and create new ones.

HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group is an official forum where countries share information and agree on principles and guidelines. There is also the EU member states' expert group on MSP for exchange on the European level.

EU-funded projects have proven valuable in creating informal settings for cross-border collaboration. In recent years there have been projects such as Baltic SCOPE, Baltic LINes, Pan Baltic SCOPE, SustainBaltic, Plan4Blue and the new Capacity4MSP. It is recommended that such opportunities will be utilized also in the phase of MSP implementation.

Regular exchange of experiences in implementing and follow-up of MSP should be organized in the Baltic Sea level. There could be joint reporting on implementation of MSP by BSR countries and it is important to continue to organize regular Baltic Sea region MSP forums. In the future the MSP forums should have representation of different sectors and their authorities and organisations as they have a role to play in implementation of MSP.



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