

Implementation of Natura 2000 in Estonian marine areas: site selection, designation and protection measures – ESTMAR

The project “Implementation of Natura 2000 in Estonian marine areas: site selection, designation and protection measures – ESTMAR” is implemented by the Estonian Marine Institute and partners from November 2007 till April 2011 with the financial support of the Norwegian financial mechanisms.



Northern pike photo: Kaido Haagen



Grey Seal photo: Markus Vetemaa



Long-tailed Duck photo: Heiko Kruusi

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the implementation of Natura 2000 in Estonian marine areas.

To achieve that, the project is implementing the following **activities**:

- **Investigations for potential new Natura 2000 sites** in offshore areas of Estonia
 - o Inventories of seabirds, fish, marine mammals and benthic habitats in 10 selected areas;
 - o Assessment of nature values of the inventoried areas and proposing the most valuable of them for designation as Natura 2000 sites;
 - o Defining borders, protection regime and management needs for the proposed sites.
- **Developing management plans for 6 existing marine protected areas in the coastal sea.** This activity is based on existing data.
- **Facilitating a constructive dialogue with social and economic stakeholders**, e.g. fishermen, infrastructure developers, mining industry for sand and gravel excavation and tourism operators, to guarantee overall acceptance of the protection regimes to be implemented.
- **International experience exchange and dialogue on project findings**
 - o 3 international seminars on different topics related to marine nature conservation.
- **Information dissemination and awareness raising**
 - o Information leaflets about the project and its results;
 - o A book on marine protected areas in Estonian waters;
 - o Internet information about the project, marine nature conservation, the sites of concern and their values, threats and future management regimes at www.sea.ee/estmar.



The Baltic Sea

Estonia is situated at the Baltic Sea, which is a small sea on a global scale, but as the world's second largest brackish water body it is ecologically unique. The Baltic Sea has only limited water exchange with the North Sea through the narrow and shallow Danish Straits, therefore the same water remains in the Baltic for up to 30 years – along with all the organic and inorganic matter it contains. This makes it very sensitive to the environmental impacts of human activities in its catchment area, which is home to ca. 85 million people. Although not very species-rich, the **Baltic Sea is home** to a unique mix of marine and freshwater species adapted to the brackish conditions, as well as a few true brackish-water species. The limited number of species involved in Baltic Sea food webs means that each individual species has a special importance in terms of the structure and dynamics of the whole ecosystem. The disappearance of a single key-species could destroy the functioning of the whole system. Such ecosystems are considered to be very vulnerable to external disturbances.

Natura 2000 is a network of protected areas in the European Union (EU), which goal is to ensure protection of rare or endangered birds, animals and plants as well as their habitats. Natura 2000 network consists of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) established for protection of the bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive and, of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) established for protection of Annex I habitat types and Annex II species of the Habitats Directive. EU Member States are responsible for maintaining or restoring the favourable conservation status of their Natura 2000 sites.

Estonian Natura 2000 network consists at the moment of 66 SPAs and 509 SACs with the total area of 1,4 Million ha, of which 45% are marine areas. Due to lack of data about marine species and habitats there are only few offshore sites designated in Estonia. By mid-2008, all EU Member States have to submit a list of marine Natura 2000 sites to the European Commission or if this is not possible then an action plan to fulfil this goal. **The project “Implementation of Natura 2000 in Estonian marine areas: site selection, designation and protection measures”** is contributing to that goal through data collection for designation of new offshore sites as well as through developing management plans for the existing Natura 2000 sites.

Steller's Eiders at the coast of Saaremaa. foto: Arvo Sildnik



Project areas



Project promoters:

Estonian Marine Institute,
University of Tartu (lead partner)
Baltic Environmental Forum – Estonia
State Nature Conservation Centre
Estonian Environment Information Centre
Estonian Ornithological Society
Estonian Fund for Nature
Baltic Environmental Forum – Latvia
Norwegian Institute of Water Research (NIVA)

www.sea.ee
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Contact information: Kristina Tiivel, Tel: +372 6597027, kristina.tiivel@gmail.com

Project home page : www.sea.ee/estmar
Information about Natura 2000 and
nature conservation in Estonia :
www.envir.ee/67247

norwegian financial mechanism
norway
grants