

## Annex 2.

# Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations - Analysing existing recommendations

The document of VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996)<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter VASAB Coastal Recommendations) consist of three main parts, each with its specific task and focus:

Section	Answers the question...	Focus
1.Objectives	<i>What should we aim to achieve?</i>	Vision, principles, desired outcomes
2. Recommendations	<i>How should we achieve it?</i>	Spatial planning practices, management measures
3. Planning procedures	<i>Who should act, how should they coordinate, and how should implementation be ensured?</i>	Responsibilities, monitoring, cooperation mechanisms

Each of the three sections was analysed to determine whether modernisation is needed, whether clarification is needed, whether the issues are already addressed at the BSR/EU level, and to record comments and suggestions, following these steps: survey results, a desk study, webinars, and expert/stakeholder discussions.

## Assessment of existing Objectives for update potential:

Objectives (1996 phrasing)	Modernisation needed?	Clarification needed?	Already Addressed at BSR/EU Level?	Comments / suggestions
a) Actions in the coastal zone should promote sustainable development and appropriate living conditions for residents	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – expand on climate, equity, access	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BSAP, EU Green Deal, Territorial Agenda 2030	Could clarify "sustainable development" with current language: climate resilience, inclusion, green economy

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [https://vasab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Recommendations\\_Spatial\\_Planning\\_Coastal\\_Zone\\_1996.pdf](https://vasab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Recommendations_Spatial_Planning_Coastal_Zone_1996.pdf)

<p><b>b) The economic potential of the coastal zone should be maintained and developed</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes – needs modern framing	<input type="radio"/> Yes – clarify "economic potential"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU Blue Economy Strategy, BSR Blue Economy Framework	<p>Should refer to "sustainable blue economy", low-impact development, innovation</p>
<p><b>c) Conservation of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainable use of natural resources on both landward and seaward sides of the shoreline is a prerequisite for sustainable development</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – ecological connectivity missing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU Biodiversity Strategy, MSFD, HELCOM BSAP	<p>Add terms like ecosystem services, ecological corridors/connectivity, OECMs</p>
<p><b>d) The coastal zone should be kept as unspoiled as possible from construction and infrastructure</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes – outdated and vague	<input type="radio"/> Yes – define what "unspoiled" means in today's context	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU EIA/SEA Directives, national zoning laws	<p>Needs rephrasing for clarity and feasibility (e.g., protection of high-value landscapes, limits on new development in sensitive zones)</p>
<p><b>e) Land use and building scale in the coastal zone should be adapted to cultural heritage and the natural/physical conditions of the landscape</b></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still relevant	<input type="radio"/> Yes – could link to landscape-scale planning or visual impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> European Landscape Convention, NEB	<p>Could be supported with visual impact assessments or spatial design principles</p>
<p><b>f) Cultural heritage, nature, and landscape values in the coastal zone should be preserved through appropriate planning and management</b></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still relevant	<input type="radio"/> Yes – define "appropriate" and tie to planning instruments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEB, national heritage strategies, SEA	<p>Can be strengthened by linking to EU cultural landscape protection and digital heritage mapping</p>
<p><b>g) The impact of land reforms on landscape values in the coastal zone should be minimized</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes – needs modernization	<input type="radio"/> Yes – land reform is no longer central; update to include development pressure, land-use change	<input type="checkbox"/> ? Not directly addressed at EU level today	<p>Reframe as: "Manage land-use change and fragmentation to preserve coastal landscape values and public interest."</p>
<p><b>h) Recreational values and the natural beauty of the coastal zone should be safeguarded, and public access secured</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mostly clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> European Green Deal, NEB, Water Framework Directive	<p>Still valid, but could mention tourism pressures, carrying capacity, and equitable access</p>
<p><b>i) Elaboration of comprehensive plans for urban areas, environmentally friendly technologies, transport systems, and energy resources should be encouraged</b></p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes – needs expansion	<input type="radio"/> Yes – mention climate neutrality, smart mobility, renewables	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU Urban Agenda, TEN-T, NECPs, Fit for 55	<p>Update to reflect digital tools, green energy, transport corridors, climate-neutral cities (EU goals)</p>

## Beyond the original recommendations: additions from webinars, discussions, survey & desk study

- **Climate change adaptation** and mitigation (webinar, survey, desk study)
- **Geopolitical cooperation and sea basin security** (webinar, discussion)
- **Alignment with MSP & ICZM** and integrative planning principles (webinar)
- **Blue economy & sustainable economic transition** (webinar)
- Stronger biodiversity conservation frameworks with emphasis on ecological connectivity (survey, desk study)
- Public engagement, social inclusion, equity (webinar, survey, desk study)
- Environmental restoration & renaturalisation (discussion, survey)
- Ecosystem services as a guiding value (survey)
- Landscape character and cultural identity (survey)
- Circular economy in coastal/marine sectors (desk study)
- Community resilience & wellbeing (survey)

## Assessment of existing Recommendations for update potential

Recommendation (1996 lettered a–o)	Modernisation needed?	Clarification needed?	Addressed at BSR/EU Level?	Comments / suggestions
a. Define coastal zone (3 km inland, 100–300 m strip)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Yes – overly fixed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HELCOM 15/1, ICZM Protocol	Replace fixed buffers with risk-based, ecosystem or functional zone definitions
b. Draft comprehensive plans at all levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input type="radio"/> Yes – add coordination mechanisms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU MSP Directive, ICZM, SEA	Reaffirm and link to cross-sector and vertical alignment tools
c. Justify new developments in coastal areas	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mostly clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEA, EIA, national spatial law	Reconfirm need for functional logic; reference cumulative impacts
d. Prefer development within/near settlements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Green Deal, zero land take by 2050	Supports densification over sprawl; remains relevant
e. Avoid visual barriers – maintain green wedges	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – update terminology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Convention	Could align with green-blue infrastructure or coastal landscape corridors
f. Require land use plan or impact assessment for large projects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEA, EIA Directives	May add climate and biodiversity criteria to assessments
g. Site windmills away from migratory bird routes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Yes – broaden scope	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU RES Strategy (REDIII), MSP, BSAP	Expand to include offshore wind planning, multi-use zones, ecosystem compatibility
h. Plans in sensitive/congested areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MSP, SEA	Consider integrated coastal vulnerability mapping tools
i. Maintain options for harbour revitalization	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – modernise for blue economy, climate neutrality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TEN-T, MSP, port policy	Include digital ports, multifunctionality, decarbonisation

<b>j. Avoid untreated sewage, regulate waste deposit locations</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – update to circular economy logic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Wastewater Directive, Green Deal	Add resource recovery, nature-based treatment options
<b>k. Integrate natural areas into green infrastructure</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input type="radio"/> Slightly – broaden to green-blue infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU GI Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy	Should reference connectivity and multifunctional networks
<b>l. Locate vacation/leisure facilities based on plans and carrying capacity</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – clarify how to assess capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEB, tourism sustainability tools	Include overtourism, sustainable tourism zoning, access equity
<b>m. Coastal protection only if preserving natural coastline</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Yes – expand to multimodal and low-emission systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU Floods Directive, Climate Adaptation	Reframe as “prioritise nature-based coastal protection.”
<b>n. Encourage green transport and address motoring impacts</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Yes – expand to multimodal and low-emission systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU Fit for 55, TEN-T	Add e-mobility, modal shift, local access planning
<b>o. Maintain and renew coastal settlement heritage</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input type="radio"/> Yes – link to spatial revitalization tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural heritage frameworks, NEB	Still relevant; could connect to adaptive reuse and participatory design

## Beyond the original recommendations: additions from webinars, discussions, survey & desk study

- **MSP & ICZM implementation tools and coherence** (webinar)
- **Social inclusion through participatory tools and engagement methods** (webinar, desk study)
- **Biodiversity frameworks and ecological connectivity in planning** (desk study)
- **Climate-neutral infrastructure & green transport corridors** (desk study)
- **Nature-based solutions and restoration practices** (survey, discussion)
- **Coastal/offshore multi-use and renewable energy planning** (survey, desk study)
- **Circular economy integration in planning guidance** (desk study)
- **Revitalization of ports, multifunctional infrastructure planning** (discussion)
- Social inclusion through participatory tools and engagement methods (webinar, desk study)
- Managing the impacts of mass tourism in line with European Green Deal and NE Bauhaus values (desk study)
- Landscape-sensitive planning and visual integration (survey)
- Assessment tools based on ecosystem services (survey)
- Use of shared spatial data and regional platforms (survey, discussion)
- Promotion of innovation, funding access, and capacity support (webinar, desk study)

## Assessment of Planning procedures:

Planning procedure (lettered a–f)	Modernisation needed?	Clarification needed?	Addressed at BSR/EU Level?	Comments / suggestions
a. Ministers ensure implementation	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – define roles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Territorial Agenda, VASAB, HELCOM	Clarify mechanism for follow-up, including national contact points or coordinators
b. Subsidiarity in implementation by country	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input type="radio"/> Slightly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU governance principles	Reaffirm importance of respecting local contexts while supporting alignment
c. Apply impact assessments for large projects; inform public early	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEA, EIA Directives	Could strengthen requirements for climate/biodiversity screening and digital public engagement
d. Monitor development and exchange information	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Yes – define what to monitor and how	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BSAP, MSFD, national MSPs	Add indicators, use of digital platforms, link to HELCOM and EU reporting
e. Countries exchange info on transboundary effects (Espoo)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Still valid	<input type="radio"/> Slightly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Espoo Convention, SEA	Reaffirm Espoo, expand use of joint consultations or notification platforms
f. Designate special conservation areas (BSPAs)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Slightly	<input type="radio"/> Yes – modernise terminology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HELCOM MPAs, Natura 2000, OECMs	Rename to HELCOM MPA; clarify links to EU and national protected area systems

## Beyond the original recommendations: additions from webinars, discussions, survey & desk study:

- **Effective multi-level governance & subsidiarity** (additional input)
- **Cross-border coordination, information exchange** (webinar, discussion)
- **Monitoring and evaluation processes and indicators** (survey)
- **Capacity building for planners and institutions** (webinar)
- **Coordinated offshore renewable energy expansion** (desk study)
- Knowledge exchange and best practice mechanisms (discussion)
- Data governance, digitalization, and real-time coastal monitoring (survey, additional input)
- Capacity building for planners and institutions (webinar)
- Align local/regional actions with national and sea-basin strategies (discussion)

# Survey and Stakeholder Insights on Coastal Priorities

To assess the continued relevance and potential update of the *VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region*, VASAB launched an expert survey and held a dedicated stakeholder webinar in 2024. These activities aimed to gather diverse input from professionals engaged in coastal planning, development, and land–sea interaction across the region.

## Survey: Purpose, Structure and Insights

The survey targeted experts involved in coastal planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region - spatial planners, policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners working at national, regional, or local levels, including those engaged in marine and terrestrial planning, or in cross-sectoral land–sea interaction.

It was designed to reflect the structure of the existing VASAB Coastal Recommendations, focusing on their themes, objectives, and processes. The aim was to uncover gaps or challenges that hinder coastal development, and to highlight valuable practices, policies, and actions related to key topics such as sustainable blue economy, biodiversity protection, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The survey was open from **June to October 2024**, required approximately **25 minutes to complete**, and collected **18 unique responses** from a diverse range of institutions across the Baltic Sea Region - ministries, agencies, regional planning bodies, and municipalities.

The responses revealed a range of perspectives shaped by national and local contexts. Despite differences, several cross-cutting themes and priorities emerged:

- **Security concerns in coastal areas**, including resilience of infrastructure and supply chains.
- **The need for improved cross-border cooperation and data sharing**, especially for managing shared resources and risks.
- **Climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies**, including risk-based planning and nature-based solutions.
- **Multi-use potential in coastal and offshore areas**, such as combining renewable energy with conservation or fisheries.
- **Balancing economic development and nature restoration**, especially in light of Green Deal objectives.
- **Reducing anthropogenic pressures**, including impacts from tourism, land use, and industry.
- **Revitalising coastal harbours** as resilient hubs that reflect changing functions, technologies, and community needs.

These insights contributed to identifying both enduring and emerging issues that future recommendations need to address.

# Webinar 1: online seminar to share survey findings and seek common ground «Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region»

Date: 20 November 2024 | Format: Online

**Updating the Coastal Planning recommendations: background, needs and challenges (incl. key insights from the survey)**  
 Emīlis Rode, Project manager at VASAB Secretariat

**It is not so much about “the vision” as about visioning; not so much about the “recommendations” as about having a common discussion around the Baltic Sea Region**

**VASAB Vision 2040 – Desirable Picture of the Future**

- Healthy Baltic Sea - central asset around which the region prospers
- Diversity of places, nature and people of the region co-exist and stimulate each other
- High quality of life based on mindset shift towards sustainability, on more cohesion, integration, solidarity and cooperation, and on a wiser use of technology.
- Adequate policies and actions help in coping with challenges

**Klaipeda Region**

**Importance of Kurzeme coastal development**

Unique, valuable, resource-intensive territory / 356 km Coastal area - not in focus in Kurzeme Region Long-term Strategy  
 Coastal issues go beyond the competence of municipalities and sectors  
 Closer cooperation and multi-level planning is needed  
 Currently under development:  
 -Local spatial plans, including thematic plans for coastal development (Local coastal municipalities)  
 -2nd Interim Report of the National Thematic Coastal Plan (Ministry of Smart Administration and Environment)

**STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The Coastal Strategy was developed through extensive stakeholder collaboration. The sectoral visions and roadmaps of the Finland's Maritime Spatial Plan and land-sea interaction studies were a central starting point in the Coastal Strategy work.

The strategy process included an expert survey, scenario work, two expert workshops, four expert group interviews and active steering group and working group work. The common development principles and key measures are the result of the collective work and input of the stakeholders. The Coastal Strategy draft elicited 70 opinions, and the views expressed were taken into account in finalising the strategy.

Steering group: Ministry of Environment and coastal regional councils + The core MSP Group in Finland  
 Consultants: WSP Finland Oy and capli Oy (responsible for the scenario work)

Figure: A summary of the content of the Coastal Strategy. At the centre of the operating model are the actors and 10 key measures. A shared vision and common principles of action provide a framework for the strategy. The outermost ring represents the changing environment against which the measures must be evaluated.

The first stakeholder webinar brought together 48 participants from all Baltic Sea countries, representing a broad spectrum of governance levels - from local municipalities to national authorities.

The webinar began by framing the discussion within the VASAB Vision 2040, highlighting strategic challenges and opportunities for the region. The survey results were then presented, helping to anchor the conversation around key trends and priorities.

## Highlighted case presentations included:

**Finnish Coastal Strategy** – Mari Pohja-Mykrä emphasized a systemic approach to coastal sustainability and demonstrated how Finland is advancing land–sea integration through planning.

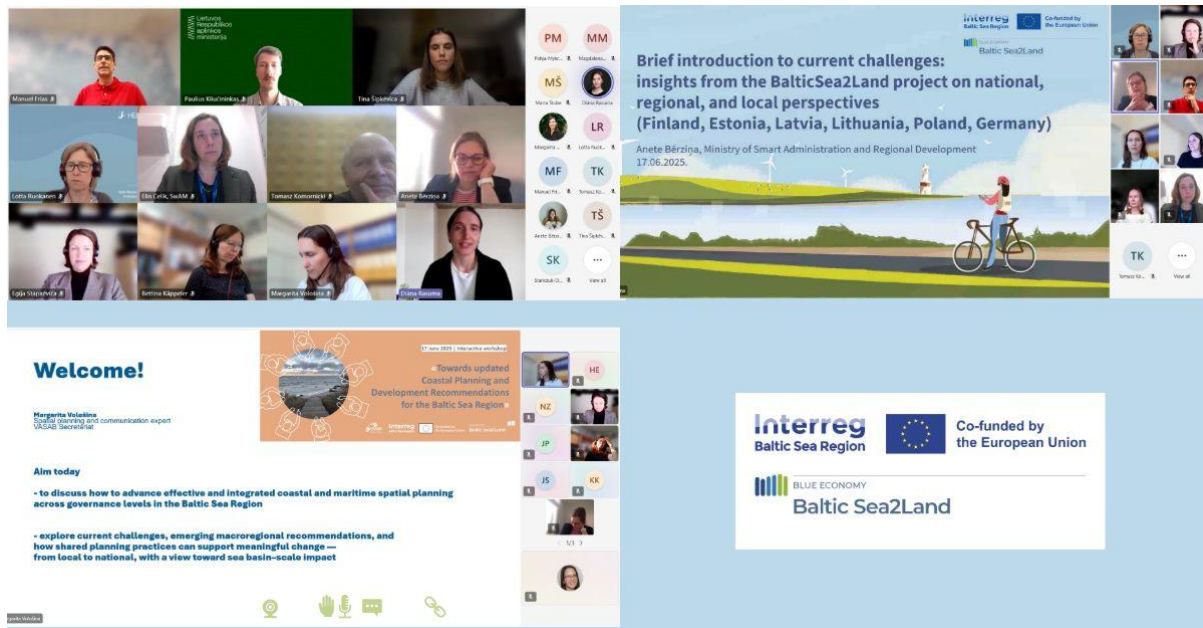
**Klaipėda Region's Blue Economy Indicators** – Greta Tautavičiūtė shared a practical case from Lithuania focusing on port modernization, sustainable fisheries, and green maritime transport.

**Kurzeme Region's Thematic Coastal Plan** – Alla Kudiņa introduced Latvia's efforts to pioneer a regional coastal plan balancing development with cultural and ecological preservation.

These real-life examples from Finland, Lithuania, and Latvia showcased the diversity of planning contexts and shared challenges across the region. The discussions emphasized the need for updated, practical, and forward-looking coastal planning recommendations, grounded in real-world practice and responsive to current policy and environmental demands.

## Webinar 2: interactive workshop to discuss how to advance effective and integrated coastal and maritime spatial planning across governance levels in the Baltic Sea Region- exploring current challenges, emerging macro-regional recommendations, and how shared planning practices can support meaningful change from local to national levels, with a view toward sea-basin-scale impact

Date: 20 November 2024 | Format: Online



Invited experts (altogether 30 participants) gathered to discuss how to advance effective coastal and maritime spatial planning across governance levels in the Baltic Sea Region.

The webinar explored current challenges, emerging macroregional recommendations, and how shared planning practices can support meaningful change - from local to national levels, with a view toward sea basin-scale impact.

**The discussion focused on three main elements:**

- **Brief introduction to current challenges** – insights from the Baltic Sea2Land project on national, regional, and local perspectives from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany.
- **Overview of emerging macroregional recommendations** – including the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on the Implementation of Integrated Coastal Management and Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea, and the update of the VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region.
- **Moderated expert roundtable discussion** on current implementation, gaps, and future needs.

The tables below summarise key insights gathered during the webinar, which brought together practitioners and stakeholders from across the Baltic Sea Region to reflect on the relevance of the current VASAB Coastal Recommendations and identify priorities for their update.

The discussion was guided by two central questions:

1. **How well do the existing recommendations serve us today?**
2. **What needs to change to make them fit for the future?**

The summary that follows captures the main messages, areas of consensus, and proposed directions for next steps.

<b>Theme 1: Current Implementation &amp; Target group</b>	
<b>FI</b>	Good awareness, national-level regulations are aligned with recommendations. Regional, local level – lower awareness, unclear role
<b>EE</b>	Implemented and integrated into different level spatial plans, but very generally (because of the general nature of the recommendations). On local level – low awareness.
<b>LV</b>	On paper (legally) – implemented, practically – there is struggling. Needs to be more explaining for regional and local level about the meaning of the recommendations and the sensitivity of coastal zones
<b>LT</b>	Implemented and considered in the big scale (national level). Local stakeholders are not aware
<b>PL</b>	Implemented, but not because of VASAB. Low awareness of recommendations, high topicality. Campaigning (social media), translations in local languages?
<b>DE</b>	Different responsibilities for terrestrial and sea planning – combined planning is important. Recommendations considered nationally on a general level, but national planning system doesn't support land-sea interactions (currently being updated). Low awareness in local level
<b>SE</b>	Most aspects are addressed in different regulations, but not because of the recommendations (low awareness). Local level needs to be addressed since they are responsible for the planning of the coastal areas (not necessarily with the recommendations but for a better integration between planning levels and to work and have a better dialogue about the issues)

Additional comments Good timing for bringing up the recommendation update, but they need to be aligned with existing regulations/legislations

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## Theme 2: Content challenges, Gaps and Emerging Challenges

FI	The missing gaps have been identified. Highlights – resilience, security (overall security of supply, maritime issues). Definition of coastal zone (not to limit it)
EE	Land privatization – accessibility of coastal areas. National and local level coastal planning alignment – understanding local stakeholders’ needs. Conflicting interests of different stakeholders
LV	BS2L project results may be used. Balancing of economy, blue economy and innovations (currently – much about building). Resilience through knowledge and nature-based solutions should be included. Challenged and complex principles of cadastres in coastal waters – municipalities work only with land. Implementation of Green Deal policy goals (green energy, wind parks) causes real conflicts with saving landscape values, bird migratory routes, and interests of coastal communities
LT	Security and safety, BS2L project can give local insight
PL	Security of supply, national security – regulated on different levels/ by different institutions.
DE	Depleting fish stocks, exclusion of fisheries from wind farm areas and certain protected areas might negatively impact coastal communities and economy - how to address this, find new perspectives for the sector and coastal regions
SE	Everything is very important in the coastal areas. Regulations of boating and public access need to be addressed.

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## Theme 3: Monitoring & Macroregional Alignment

FI	Reporting templates/ forms to save time for people that fill them, possibility to report on changes only. Reporting on regional, local level?
EE	Using existing reporting systems.
LV	Using existing formats and indicators that can be used to support coastal recommendation monitoring. BS2L Klaipeda region indicators? Simplicity and logic should be the key principles of the reports
LT	Using existing formats/ information sources (such as VASAB country fiches, MSP tracking) for monitoring. Including local stakeholders in country fiches?
PL	Recommendation monitoring as an agenda point in HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG for countries to give insights.

**DE** Including coastal recommendation topics in VASAB country fiches

**SE** A living discussion / dialogue / reflection on the topics of recommendations.

**BSR** Implementation reporting template (HELCOM) that is structured by topics/ recommendations with check boxes and free-text comments, each 3 or 6 years and the previous reporting is always the basis for the next reporting

**Additional comments** Should we consider AI to optimize reporting from different sources?

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### **Recommendation structure: additional comments**

- Good timing for bringing up the recommendation update, but they need to be aligned with existing regulations/legislations
- It's not that these recommendations were implemented simply because they were written in a document, but because they captured real problems, issues, and needs — especially from the perspective of planners.
- Planning systems are different, so the recommendations are not generally applicable for each country. Maybe they should be reformulated?
- The recommendations are general and specific at the same time. Maybe they should be divided in two levels? Land issues are more detailed than sea issues.
- Each recommendation followed by real action?
- In EU projects we always should describe, how the project tackle the climate change aspects, gender equality aspects. Maybe planning documents also should include such chapter on how it takes into consideration HELCOM/VASAB recommendations?