



# Revision of the Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

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## 1. Introduction

The [Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland 2030](#) entered into force in December 2020. The plan is formed of three separate plans prepared and adopted regionally in three planning areas. Together they cover all of Finland's coastal and marine areas. Due to changes in the marine operating environment since the adoption of the plans, a need for revision has been identified. The revision work takes place between 2024-2027. The revised plans are expected to be adopted at the end of 2027. A strategic environmental assessment will be conducted as part of the revision work. Both a national and an international consultation will take place simultaneously in 2027.

This document describes the purpose and process of maritime spatial planning in Finland, and the different steps during the updating process. This document is made available to other Baltic Sea countries in the prenotification for consultation according to the SEA Protocol annexed to the Espoo Convention.

## 2. What is maritime spatial planning?

The purpose of maritime spatial planning is to promote the sustainable development and growth of the different uses of the marine area, the sustainable use of its natural resources and the achievement of good environmental status of the marine environment. Maritime spatial planning examines the marine environment as a whole, taking into account the interaction between land and sea. The Maritime Spatial Plan is based on reconciling a sustainable blue economy with the interests of different stakeholders in marine areas. Principles on ecosystem-based approach (EBA) defined by HELCOM-VASAB's maritime spatial planning working group are a key framework guiding the planning process. The EBA guidelines are currently being updated and the new principles will be applied in the Finnish maritime spatial planning revision as they are finalised in 2026.

The maritime spatial plan takes into account various themes and stakeholders, including the energy sector, maritime transport (incl. ports), fishing and aquaculture, extractive industries, maritime industries, blue biotechnology, cultural heritage, tourism and recreation, as well as the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment. The needs relating to national defence and the special characteristics of the marine areas are also taken into account.

Maritime spatial planning deals with various cross-cutting themes, such as the European Green Deal, climate-smart maritime spatial planning, marine multiuse, national safety and security of supply.

Maritime spatial planning is linked to the goals and measures of [Finland's Coastal Strategy](#). Both aim to promote vibrant coastal communities and sustainable use of coastal area.



### Principles of maritime spatial planning\*:

- Sustainable development
- Ecosystem approach
  - Long-term perspective and objectives
- The precautionary principle
- Participation and transparency
- High-quality data and information basis
- Transnational coordination and consultation
- Coherent terrestrial and maritime spatial planning
- Planning adapted to the characteristics and special conditions of different areas
- Continuous planning

\*) HELCOM-VASAB General Principles for Maritime Spatial Planning. <https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HELCOM-VASAB-MSP-Principles.pdf>. The principles are currently being updated and the new principles will be applied in 2026.

## 2.1 Legislation and guidance

In Finland, maritime spatial planning is nationally regulated by Section 8a of the Land Use Act (482/2016). On an international level, the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy provides the strategic framework for maritime spatial planning, which is regulated through the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU). The aim of the directive is, in accordance with the European Oceans Pact currently in preparation by the European Commission, to promote sustainable blue economy, as well as the sustainable use of marine natural resources, support of resilient and healthy marine and coastal areas, and the protection of ecosystems under circumstances where the use of marine areas and human pressures are increasing.

*In maritime spatial planning, a shared vision for sustainable use of the marine area is developed among maritime stakeholders.*

*The goal of marine spatial planning is a healthy, productive, and safe sea.*

*Planning together for the future!*



### 3. Why is the planning interactive?

The eight coastal Regional Councils are responsible for the preparation of maritime spatial plans. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the general development and guidance of maritime spatial planning, as well as cooperation with other countries.

Maritime spatial planning is carried out in close cooperation with stakeholders, which is why interaction is an important part of the planning process. All authorities and entities whose areas of competence are covered by the maritime spatial plan have the opportunity to participate in its preparation. Formed under the leadership of the Regional Councils, maritime spatial plans reflect a common vision on the future sustainable use of the marine area.

#### *Section 67c Participation and opinions*

*The Regional Councils must organise the preparation of the maritime spatial plan in such a way that the authorities and entities whose areas of competence are covered by the plan have the opportunity to participate in its preparation. The Regional Councils must seek the opinion of the authorities and entities whose competencies or functions are substantially affected by the plan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be consulted on the EEZ.*

*The parties other than those referred to in subsection 1 must be given the opportunity to consult the preparatory material and to express their views on it by publishing a notice on the Internet. At least 30 days must be allowed for the submission of comments.*

### 4. Who is affected by the planning?

The Maritime Spatial Plan is a strategic vision for the sustainable use of the marine space and the promotion of a healthy marine environment, developed in partnership with stakeholders. The plan will identify in general terms the potential for multiple uses of the maritime areas and support the coordination of maritime activities. The key themes and stakeholders include the energy sector, maritime transport (including ports), fishing and aquaculture, extractive industries, maritime industries, blue biotechnology, cultural heritage, tourism and recreation, as well as the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment. The needs relating to national defence and the special characteristics of the marine areas are also taken into account.

Due to the coordinating nature of the Maritime Spatial Plan, the measures are developed through extensive interaction between MSP practitioners, experts and marine stakeholders.

At national level, there is an inter-ministerial MSP Cooperation Group and MSP Research Cooperation Group, which are coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment. The coordination of MSP cooperation leads the Sectoral Contact Person Network, which includes maritime authorities, research institutions, and organisations advocating for and developing stakeholder interests.





## MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING STAKEHOLDERS

- **Regional development and planning:** Regional Councils, municipalities, business organisations, companies, Metsähallitus (state-owned forestry company), etc.
- **Energy sector:** companies and interest groups (energy production, transmission and storage), etc.
- **Fisheries:** public authorities, interest groups, developers and entrepreneurs such as fishing regions, professional fishermen, fish farmers, fishing ports, etc.
- **Extractive industries:** entrepreneurs, organisations, etc.
- **International actors:** EU's marine areas; Baltic Sea countries, especially Sweden and Estonia; etc.
- **Cultural heritage:** National Board of Antiquities, regional museums, other museums, organisations, etc.
- **National defence:** Defence Forces and the Finnish Border Guard
- **Tourism:** entrepreneurs, municipalities and developers, etc.
- **Maritime transport:** Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Traficom and other authorities and stakeholders
- **Maritime industry:** industry, logistics, etc.
- **Protection and conservation:** nature conservation and environmental organisations, Metsähallitus, etc.
- **Research and educational institutions:** Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE), Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), universities, Finnish Meteorological Institute, Archipelago Research Institute, Geological Survey of Finland (GTK), Kotka Maritime Research Centre, etc.
- **Ownership and administration of water and land areas:** e.g. Metsähallitus, VEALO, Landowners' Organization, MTK
- **Public authorities:** ministries, ELY Centres and municipal representatives, etc.
- **Recreation:** marine nature, recreational fishing and hunting, boating, residents, cottagers, organisations, municipalities, service providers
- **Other Baltic Sea countries**



## 5. What are the maritime spatial planning areas?

There are three maritime spatial planning areas in Finland. Each planning area is in charge of preparing their own maritime spatial plan. The three plans are prepared in close collaboration between all coastal Regional Councils and together they form the Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland that covers all of Finland's marine and coastal areas.

- **Gulf of Finland** (Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council and Regional Council of Kymenlaakso)
- **Archipelago Sea and Southern Bothnian Sea** (Regional Council of Southwest Finland and Regional Council of Satakunta)
- **Northern Bothnian Sea, Quark and Bay of Bothnia** (Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, Regional Council of Central Ostrobothnia, Council of Oulu Region and Regional Council of Lapland).

The Regional Council of Southwest Finland is responsible for the coordination of the Finnish Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Cooperation. Referred to as MSP Cooperation Coordination in this document.

The Åland Islands are responsible for drafting the maritime spatial plan for their own region, based on a decision by the Government of Åland.

See the current Finland's Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 at:  
[meriskenaariot.info/merialuesuunnitelma/en/merialuesuunnitelma-english/](https://meriskenaariot.info/merialuesuunnitelma/en/merialuesuunnitelma-english/) (FI, SV and EN)

Section 8a of the Finnish Land Use Act provides for the preparation of a Maritime Spatial Plan as follows:

### 67 b §

#### *Preparation and adoption of the Maritime Spatial Plan*

*The Maritime Spatial Plan is drawn up for Finland's territorial waters and the EEZ. The responsibility for the preparation and approval of Finland's Maritime Spatial Plan rests with the Regional Councils whose territory includes territorial waters. The Regional Councils should prepare the Maritime Spatial Plan in cooperation, and regional plans should be coordinated.*



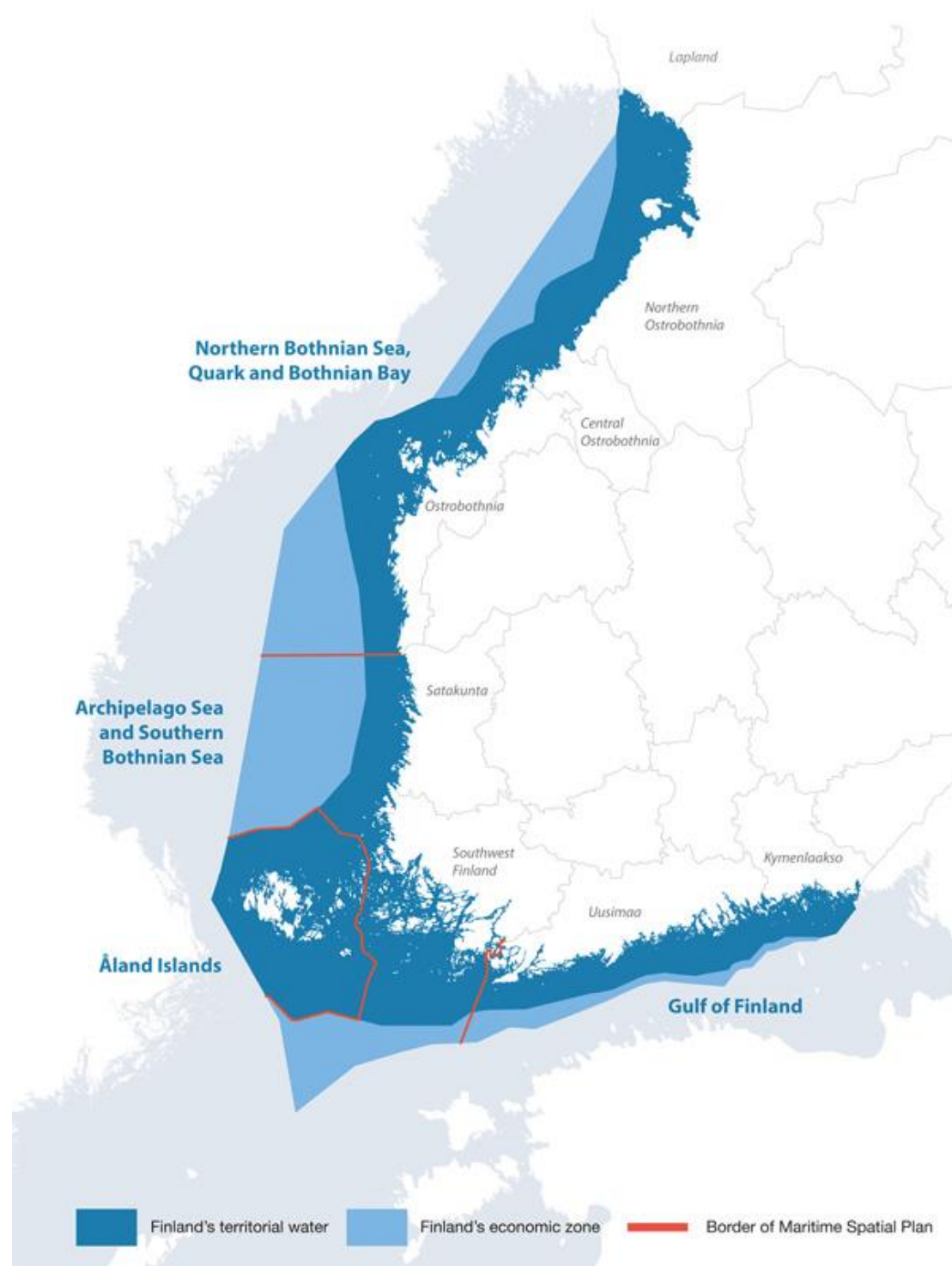


Figure 1 The Finnish maritime spatial planning areas on a map. The Åland Islands are responsible for drafting the maritime spatial plan for their own region.





## 6. Which areas are covered by maritime spatial planning?

Maritime spatial plan in Finland covers **territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone**.

Planning area starts from the coastline.

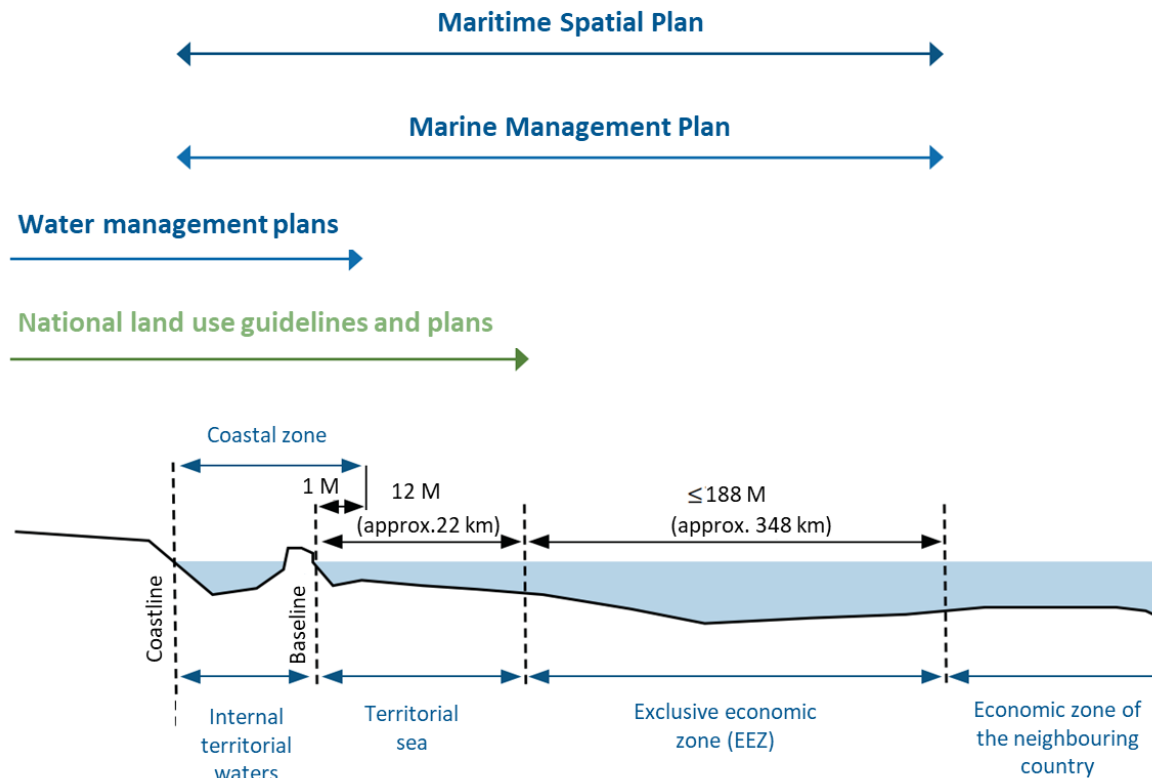


Figure 2 Marine areas covered by maritime spatial planning.

## 7. What is the impact of the Maritime Spatial Plan?

The Maritime Spatial Plan is strategic and general in nature:

- The plan has indirect steering impacts; as a spatial planning tool, it supports regional planning and development by providing information on the potential and constraints of maritime industries and the marine environment.
- The impact of the plan arises by virtue of the collaborative planning process, in other words through the common understanding reached by the stakeholder groups, shared knowledge, as well as through commitment to and perceived ownership of the plan.



- Its effectiveness also stems from its links to national, regional and sectoral policies and strategies. The plan also supports the objectives of regional development programmes and their implementation, regional land use planning, regional development projects, as well as natural resource plans and other maritime management plans.

## Maritime Spatial Plan

Territorial waters and the economic zone, prepared by the Regional Councils

Strategic



### Regional plan

Includes territorial waters, prepared by the Regional Councils

Legally  
binding



### Master plan

Includes territorial waters, prepared by the Municipalities

Legally  
binding



Figure 3 Maritime spatial plan in relation to other land-use planning.

## 8. Revision of Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland (2024-2027)

The revision of Finland's Maritime Spatial Plan was formally initiated at the beginning of 2024 by decision of all eight coastal Regional Councils. The revised plan, which consists of three regionally prepared plans to be adopted by the Regional Assemblies in their respective planning areas, is expected to enter into force at the end of 2027.

Since the first Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland entered into force (December 2020), the maritime operating environment has undergone major changes: EU regulations have been renewed, marine energy production targets have increased, climate issues have become more prominent, and the importance of shipping and maritime areas in terms of security of supply and overall security has grown. At the beginning of 2025, a new law on offshore wind energy in the exclusive economic zone (937/2024) was adopted, aiming to clarify the planning and licensing regime in the EEZ to accelerate offshore green transition projects. According to the new law, the areas for offshore wind development in the EEZ are selected by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and approved by decision of the Finnish Government. In addition, an update of the water and marine management plans will be completed by the end of 2026. In the [Programme of Measures of Finland's Marine Strategy 2022–2027](#), a measure on identifying the revision and data needs of maritime spatial planning and synchronising the planning process with the marine management plan is included.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is considered essential to revise the maritime spatial plan in a shorter timeframe than foreseen in the national Regulation on maritime spatial planning (816/2016), which states that the plan is to be revised every ten years at least.

### 8.1. Strategic environmental assessment

In the second round of maritime spatial planning, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be carried out as part of the preparation of the plan. The SEA will describe and assess the direct, indirect, cumulative, long-term and short-term impacts of the plan. The focus of the assessment will be on the significant impacts identified, and the assessment will be conducted on a strategic level.

An international consultation will be held in accordance with the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Espoo Convention regarding transboundary impacts. These are implemented in Finnish law through the Act on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (200/2005). The consultation will be held simultaneously for all three regionally prepared draft plans.

### Assessment of the plan's impacts on the environment

The potential significant environmental impacts of the revised plan, including transboundary impacts, will be identified and assessed during the SEA process. This includes also identifying and assessing impacts on human health. Although the maritime spatial plan is a guiding non-binding strategic document, it has verifiable impacts. For instance, the strategic maritime spatial plans overlap with the legally binding regional land-use plans prepared by the same officials and are adopted by the same Regional Councils. In addition, the maritime spatial plans serve as an



information source when the relevant authorities select (and auction) offshore wind energy areas in the EEZ.

The biggest changes and impacts on a transboundary level are anticipated from the marine energy sector, namely offshore wind energy development and related cumulative impacts. For example, impacts on marine nature, mammals, birds, fish, geodiversity and landscape will be assessed.

Impacts will be assessed during the preparation of the plan, drawing on reports and studies prepared in the context of maritime spatial planning, other existing sources and expert evaluations. These include, but are not limited to:

- Maritime spatial planning and the impact of maritime sectors on the regional economy (to be published in 2025)
- Maritime spatial planning: security of supply for maritime industries and the overall security of the maritime area (to be published in 2025)
- The Finnish ecologically significant marine underwater areas and climate change (to be published in 2025)
- [Study on maritime safety and wind farms in the Gulf of Bothnia](#) (Traficom 2025)
- Overview of the current situation and future development of offshore wind energy: [Merituulivoiman tilanne- ja kehityskuvan kokonaistarkastelu](#) (2024)
- Overview of the current situation and future development of offshore wind energy, survey on social and cultural impacts: [Merituulivoiman tilanne- ja kehityskuvan kokonaistarkastelu, sosiaalisten ja kulttuuristen vaikutusten kysely](#) (2024)
- Valuable areas for ecosystem services in Finland's marine areas: [Ekosysteemipalveluiden arvoalueet Suomen merialueilla](#) (Suomen ympäristökeskuksen raportteja 6/2024)
- State of Finland's marine environment 2024: [Suomen meriympäristön tila 2024](#) (Suomen ympäristökeskuksen raportteja 35/2024)
- The effectiveness of the Maritime Spatial Plan and its development in Finland: [Merialuesuunnitelman vaikuttavuus ja sen kehittäminen Suomessa](#) (2024)
- Finnish trawler fleet fishing areas in the Baltic Sea 2010-2022: [Suomen troolilaivaston kalastusalueet Itämerellä vuosina 2010–2022](#) (Luonnonvarakeskus 102/2023)
- Impact assessment of Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland 2030: [Merialuesuunnitelmien vaikutusten arviointi](#) (2020)
- Monitoring and evaluation model for maritime spatial planning: [Merialuesuunnittelun evaluoinnin ja monitoroinnin johdantodokumentti](#) (2020)
- Special characteristics of the Northern Bothnian Sea, Quark and Bothnian Bay: [Pohjoisen Selkämeren, Merenkurkun ja Perämeren ominaispiirteet](#) (2019)
- Special characteristics of the Gulf of Finland: [Saaristomeren ja Selkämeren eteläosan suunnittelualueen ominaispiirteet](#) (2019)
- Special characteristics of the Archipelago Sea and Southern part of Bothnian Sea: [Suomenlahden suunnittelualueen ominaispiirteet](#) (2019)



The list will be complemented as the planning progresses. New reports and data will be commissioned where considered necessary by the MSP authorities.

### Plan alternatives

During the planning process, plan alternatives will be developed, based on the major themes identified for revision in the second planning round. The environmental impacts of the alternatives will be assessed already at the working phase during autumn 2025 through expert evaluations in connection with the stakeholder interaction forums. The impacts will be assessed in relation to the current state of the environment and against the so-called zero alternative (the current Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland 2030). The first draft plan will be prepared on the basis of the alternatives considered.

### Monitoring of environmental impacts

After the plan enters into force, the environmental impact and effectiveness of the plan will be monitored. Further information on monitoring will be made available on the [www.merialuesuunnittelu.fi/en](http://www.merialuesuunnittelu.fi/en) website.

## 9. How will the maritime spatial planning process progress?

The revision of the Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland takes place during 2024-2027.

Active planning work is done during 2025 and early 2026, after which the first draft plans for the three planning areas will be ready. An environmental impact assessment will be conducted based on the draft plans during 2026. The three draft plans and the environmental impact assessment will both be made available for national and international consultation during 2027.

Responses to the statements, potential negotiations as well as necessary modifications to the draft plans will be made in the autumn 2027 before the final plan proposals will be presented to the respective coastal Regional Assemblies in December 2027.

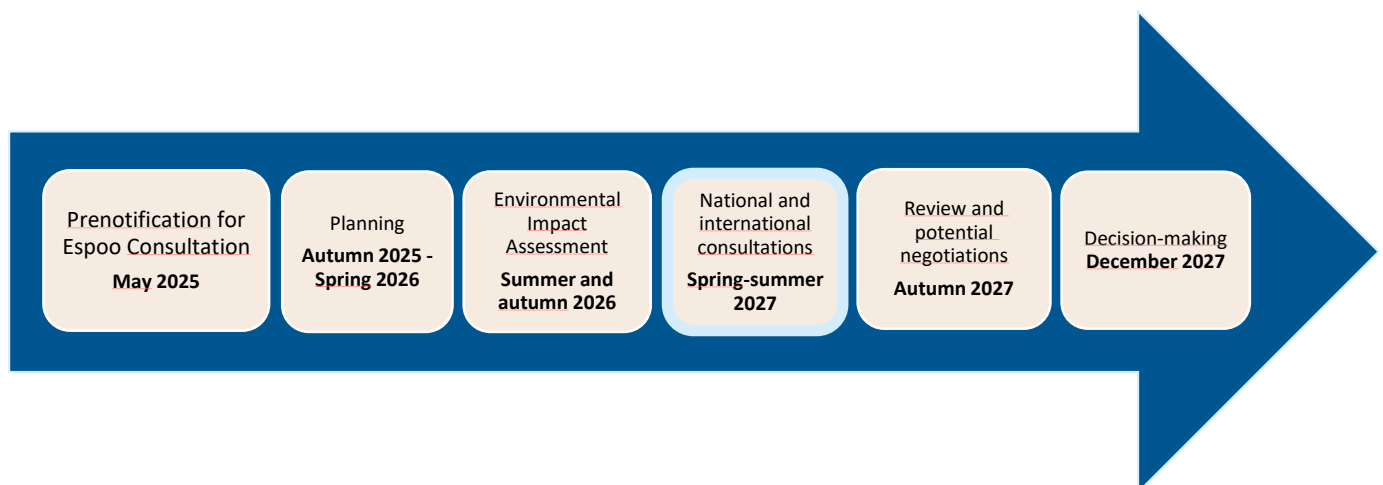


Figure 4 Overview of the process timeline.

