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THE PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT OF BALTIC SEA IN LITHUANIAN LEGISLATION

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Abstract *The Baltic Sea is named as one of the most polluted seas in the world and is of increasing public and state concern. The pollution of the Baltic Sea is determined by the hydrographic, ecological and geographical characteristics of the sea. However, pollution of the Baltic Sea is determined not only by the geographical, ecological and hydrographic characteristics of the Baltic Sea. Active human activity in the Baltic Sea region also contributes to the large scale of pollution. The regulation of the Baltic Sea environmental protection consists of a wide-scale legal regulatory mechanism for the protection of the Baltic Sea environment. Lithuanian legal regulation includes aspects of maritime flora and fauna protection, the evaluation of the impact of planned economic activities, the regime for the protection of marine environment, the measures of protection of coastal zone in the seashore of the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, the article discusses the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in Lithuanian legal regulation.*

Keywords: *Baltic Sea; marine environment protection; Marine Strategy Framework Directive; environmental impact assessment*

Introduction

The Baltic Sea is named as one of the most polluted seas in the world and is of increasing public and state concern (Grybauskienė, 2008, p. 38). The pollution of the Baltic Sea is determined by the hydrographic, ecological and geographical characteristics of the sea. First of all, the Baltic Sea is a semi-enclosed sea connected to the North Sea by very small, narrow straits: the Lesser Belt, the Greater Belt and the Sound (Fitzmaurice, 1992, p. 1). The narrowness of the straits connecting the Baltic Sea and the North Sea means that the water in the Baltic Sea is renewed only every 30 years (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, 2018). Second, the Baltic Sea is a shallow sea. The small volume of water in the Baltic Sea and limited water change means that the pollution entering the Baltic Sea is not dispersed in the global ocean, but accumulates in the Baltic Sea and causes long-term damage to the marine environment. Third, the Baltic Sea is the largest body of desalinated water in the world. Baltic Sea water is a mixture of salty water from the North Sea and fresh salty water entering the Baltic Sea. Because seawater is too salty for freshwater plant and animal species, and too fresh for marine species, only a few species have been able to adapt to such special environmental conditions of the Baltic Sea. However, the limited number of such species also means that each species has a special importance in maintaining the life and dynamics of the entire ecosystem (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, 2003, p. 7). It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that a special, unique and highly pollution-sensitive

ecosystem and environment of the Baltic Sea has been formed due to the geographical, ecological and hydrographic characteristics of the Baltic Sea. This factor determines the need for special environmental protection of the Baltic Sea.

However, pollution of the Baltic Sea is determined not only by the geographical, ecological and hydrographic characteristics of the Baltic Sea. Active human activity in the Baltic Sea region also contributes to the large scale of pollution. The water of the Baltic Sea washes the shores of 9 countries - Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany. About 85 million people live in the Baltic Sea basin, about 15 million on the coast (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, 2003, p. 22). The Baltic Sea region has well-developed industry, agriculture, shipping and other activities. It should be noted that the inland waters of all the states of the Baltic region, i.e. about 250 rivers, with urban and industrial wastewater and other pollutants flow into the Baltic Sea. Thus, the agriculture, industry, shipping, depletion of biological resources, pollution from different sources of pollution and the resulting eutrophication contribute to the deterioration of the environment of the Baltic Sea.

The regulation of the Baltic Sea environmental protection consists of a wide-scale legal regulatory mechanism for the protection of the Baltic Sea environment. Environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is regulated by various legal regimes. First of all, the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is regulated by various international agreements: the general guidelines for the protection of the marine environment and the obligations of states are provided by the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Helsinki Convention is dedicated specifically to the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea basin, and individual aspects such as pollution from ships or the protection of biological diversity are regulated by other international agreements. Secondly, the protection of the Baltic Sea application is regulated at the level of EU law. The main document dedicated to the protection of the marine environment is the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which is implemented by the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy. EU law also contains other EU directives related to the protection of the marine environment. Thirdly, the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is implemented by transposing the general obligations and standards stipulated in international and EU law into national law, in our case, Lithuanian law, which will be the object of the analysis of this particular paper.

It is clear that the main threats to the environment of the Baltic Sea, such as non-native species, fishing, human-caused eutrophication, irreversible changes in hydrographic conditions, pollutants, marine litter and underwater noise are caused by human activities. Although the protection of the environment of the Baltic Sea is implemented by the ecosystem-based method of human activities, thereby creating conditions for the sustainable use of marine goods and services, in order to achieve a good state of the marine environment, human activities still undoubtedly influence the environment of the Baltic Sea. It should be noted that with the growth of energy and industry in the Baltic Sea region, the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea faces new challenges: microplastic pollution, underwater noise and rapidly growing infrastructure, such as the environmental aspects of installing a wind farm.

The legal regulation of the Baltic Sea environmental protection in Lithuania: parliamentary level

International and regional agreements are very important and significant legal regulatory measures for the protection of the Baltic Sea environment, which encourage the adoption of relevant national legislation into the national legal base. The legal regulation of environmental

protection of the Baltic Sea at the national level is determined by various laws and governmental decrees. These legal acts aim to harmonize the environmental protection policy of the Baltic Sea not only with the guidelines for the protection of the sea and its environment established by the EU, but also with other international obligations.

First of all, the duty of the state and man to protect the environment, and at the same time the environment of the Baltic Sea from harmful effects, is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992, Art. 53). The state is committed to taking care of "the protection of the natural natural environment, fauna and flora, individual natural objects and particularly valuable areas, ensures that natural resources are used in moderation, as well as restored and enriched. It is prohibited by law to devastate the earth, its depths, waters, pollute waters and air, have a radiation effect on the environment, and impoverish flora and fauna." (The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992, Art. 54).

In 1992 the Law on Environmental Protection of the Republic of Lithuania was also adopted. This law establishes the basic rights and obligations of natural and legal persons, ensuring the rights of the people of the Republic of Lithuania to a healthy and safe environment, the harmonious development of interaction between society and nature; preservation of the diversity of organisms and the living environment necessary for them. Other laws and normative acts regulating the use of natural resources and environmental protection are adopted on the basis of this law.

After the restoration of independence in 1990, a lot of attention was paid in Lithuania to the development of the system of protected areas. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in 1993 adopted the Law on Protected Areas of the Republic of Lithuania, the purpose of which is to regulate the system of protected areas and social relations related to it, the legal bases for determining and establishing protected areas, changing their boundaries, changing their status, protection, management and control, regulating activities in them, as well as areas of international importance, among them the regulation of the territories of the European ecological network "Natura 2000" and the creation of the natural framework and activities in them. Protected areas are established in order to preserve territorial complexes and objects (values) of natural and cultural heritage, landscape and biological diversity, to ensure the ecological balance of the landscape, the balanced use and restoration of natural resources, to create conditions for cognitive tourism, scientific research and monitoring of the state of the environment, to promote natural and cultural heritage territorial complexes and objects (values) (The Law on Protected Areas, Art. 3). In the Republic of Lithuania, there are more than 15 protected areas covering part of the Baltic Sea or closely related to the environment of the Baltic Sea - Curonian Spit National Park, Pajūris Regional Park, Baltic Sea Thalasological Reserve, Karklė Thalasological Reserve, Neringa Thalasological Reserve, etc. It should be noted that the Curonian Spit is recognized as having exceptional global value and is included in the list of World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

In order to implement the requirements of Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds and of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, a network of NATURA 2000 territories is being developed in Lithuania. NATURA 2000 areas are integrated into the current national system of protected areas. During the implementation of the network of NATURA 2000 territories in Lithuania, 85 territories (4 of them marine) important for the protection of birds, according to the EU Birds Directive and 579 territories (4 of them marine) important for the protection of habitats, according to the EU Habitats Directive, have already been established. The development of this network does not aim to create such nature reserves where all human activities are prohibited. It is even necessary to support or encourage such human

activities in the areas established to protect biological diversity, which would be compatible with the objectives of environmental protection.

The legal regulation of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is also implemented by the Law on Wildlife Fauna of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1997, which regulates public relations in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania and its airspace, in the territorial sea of the Republic of Lithuania, on the continental shelf and in the economic zone in the Baltic Sea, related to the natural environment of or in the use, protection and protection regulation of temporarily present, migratory or otherwise visible or detectable wild animals, habitats and nests of their species, keeping wild animals from other natural areas in captivity and their other use. This law aims to ensure compliance with Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species.

Another law, very closely related to biological diversity and its protection, is the Law on Protected Animals, Plants, Fungal Species and Communities of the Republic of Lithuania (1997), which establishes and regulates the relations of legal and natural persons related to the protection of protected animal, plant and fungal species and communities and their habitats and vegetation (habitat) protection, the main requirements for the preservation and propagation of these species and communities. The law establishes the basic principles of organizing the protection of protected species and communities. This law implements Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds.

It is necessary to mention the Law on Environmental Monitoring (1997), which determines the content, structure, implementation of environmental monitoring, the rights and duties and responsibilities of the entities participating in the environmental monitoring process. The main tasks of environmental monitoring:

1. constantly and systematically monitor the state of the natural environment and its elements in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania;
2. to systematize, evaluate and forecast spontaneous and anthropogenic changes occurring in the natural environment, trends and possible consequences of natural environment change;
3. to collect, analyze and provide state institutions, the public with information about the state of the natural environment, necessary to ensure sustainable development, territorial planning, social development decisions, scientific and other purposes;
4. to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented environmental protection measures;
5. to ensure international exchange of environmental monitoring information.

It should be noted that state monitoring of the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon is carried out in Lithuania. A state monitoring network operates in the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon, where macrophytes, bottom habitats, ichthyofauna, birds, garbage, noise, coastal dynamics, coastal hydrological and meteorological measurements and observations are carried out.

One of the main legal acts regulating the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is the Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1997, the purpose of which is to determine the basic principles and measures of the protection of the marine environment, the rights and obligations of persons engaged in economic activities

that have or may have a direct or indirect impact for the marine environment, as well as the competence and main functions of state and municipal institutions in the field of marine environment protection management. This law applies to ships flying the flag of the Republic of Lithuania, foreign ships located in the sea area of the Republic of Lithuania, persons engaged in economic activities in the land and sea area of the Republic of Lithuania that have or may have an impact on the marine environment, and state and municipal institutions whose competence or main functions are related to the marine environment. environmental protection.

The Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment (1997) lays down the foundations for the formation and implementation of the environmental protection policy of the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, this legal act implements the Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (hereinafter - Marine Strategy Framework Directive), as the obligation to implement the Baltic Sea Region Strategy is transferred to national law. National legislator and other institutions are obliged to plan measures for the protection of the environment of the Baltic Sea: to carry out the evaluation of the condition of the marine environment, to establish the criteria for the good state of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea, to foresee the objectives for the protection of the marine environment, to prepare and implement the program for monitoring the state of the marine environment. As in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the The Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment (1997) also stipulates that an action plan for the implementation of Baltic Sea environmental protection measures is prepared, detailing these measures and determining actions to achieve or maintain a good state of the marine environment.

It should be noted that the Ministry of the Environment prepares, organises, coordinates and controls the national development programs in which measures to protect the environment of the Baltic Sea are planned. The criteria for the good state of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea region, the assessment of the state of the marine environment, the characteristics of the good state of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea region the environment minister approves the requirements for establishing marine environment protection goals and measures to achieve or maintain a good environmental condition in the Baltic Sea region.

The Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment (1997) establishes environmental impact assessment, establishment of protected areas, pollution prevention requirements, ship waste management, liquidation of pollution incidents and management of other activities in the sea area of the Republic of Lithuania. For example, the Law provides that the protection, use and other activities of natural resources in the maritime area of the Republic of Lithuania are determined by this Law, the Law on Environmental Protection, The Law on Environmental Impact Assessment of Planned Economic Activities, other laws and legal acts. The construction and reconstruction of hydrotechnical structures, wind power plants, fish farms, ports or other infrastructure structures, as well as excavation, drilling, blasting works, seismic surveys, military exercises and other planned activities that may have a negative impact on the marine environment are carried out only according to the requirements set out in the Law on Environmental Protection, The Law on the Environmental Impact Assessment of Planned Economic Activity and other laws.

Institutions and officials carrying out state control of environmental protection, in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on State Control of Environmental Protection (2002), control whether persons comply with the prevention of pollution from ships and other requirements for the protection of the marine environment and the use of natural resources set out in this law and other legal acts.

Another law closely related to the regulation of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is the Law on the Coastal Zone of the Republic of Lithuania (2002). This law describes the objectives of determining the coastal zone, its components, determines the protection and use of coastal landscape land and sea water area. The objectives of establishing a coastal zone are:

1. using rationally to preserve the landscape of the Curonian Spit, which is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the continental coastal landscape, the habitats of rare and endangered plant and animal species, and other natural resources;
2. to ensure the balanced use of the coastal belt for the needs of the state and society;
3. ensure the implementation of measures for the protection of natural and cultural values of the landscape;
4. to enable the public to use the recreational resources of the coastal strip. (The Law on the Coastal Zone, Art. 3).

According to the Law on the Coastal Zone (2002, Art. 4), the coastal zone is a land territory no narrower than 100 m from the sea shore line, which includes a dune ridge, foothill, cliff and beach, stretching from the state border of the Republic of Latvia to the northern breakwater of Klaipėda port, the Curonian Spit to the state border of the Russian Federation, territorial waters of the Baltic Sea up to 20 m isobath. This law regulates the activities in the coastal zone - land management and use, issuance of documents allowing construction in the coastal zone, coastal management, monitoring of the condition of the coasts and control of the use of the coastal zone and responsibility for violations.

It is necessary to note that shoreline management measures to preserve or restore important or characteristic features of the shores are provided for in the Coastal Zone Management Programme (Ministry of the Environment, 2014). The Ministry of the Environment has prepared a draft of the Coastal Zone Management Programme for 2023-2032 (Ministry of the Environment, 2023). This program foresees that in the next decade, priority will be given to the following priority directions of coastal management: protection of natural processes, regeneration and protection of the ridge and dunes, deflationary forms and slopes are covered with branch formwork, the dune ridge is reinforced with fences, paths and stairs are installed, coastal zone is reset (Ministry of the Environment, 2023).

Environmental Impact Assessment of the activities carried out in the Baltic Sea

The legal regulation of the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea is closely related to the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment of Planned Economic Activities of the Republic of Lithuania (1996) (hereinafter - EIA Law). This law regulates the processes of selection of planned economic activities for environmental impact assessment and environmental impact assessment of planned economic activities, and mutual relations between the participants of these processes. Many national laws, such as the marine environment protection, protected areas law and EU directives, oblige countries to carry out an environmental impact assessment. According to the EIA Law, an environmental impact assessment is carried out when:

1) the planned economic activity is listed among the types of planned economic activity whose impact on the environment must be assessed (Appendix 1 of the EIA law);
2) during the selection of the planned economic activity for the environmental impact assessment it is determined that it is necessary to carry out an environmental impact assessment for this particular planned economic activity;
3) the implementation of the planned economic activity may have an impact on the territories of the European ecological network "Natura 2000" and when the institution of

protected areas determines, in accordance with the procedure established by the Minister of the Environment, that this impact may be significant. (EIA Law, 1996).

Annex 1 of the EIA Law (1996) stipulates that the impact on the environment must be assessed when:

- the economic activity is related to the extraction of traditional hydrocarbons (oil or gas) in the sea area;
- the installation of seaports or wharves is carried out, including installation of loading and/or unloading terminals, facilities for ships with a carrying capacity of 1,350 tons and more, excluding ferry piers, construction of gas, oil or chemical supply pipelines (when the diameter of the pipe is 800 mm and more, and the length is 40 km and more) etc. (EIA Law, 1996, Annex 1).

Annex 2 of the EIA Law (1996) provides a list of types of planned economic activities that must be selected for environmental impact assessment. This list includes types of economic activities related to the impact on the environment of the Baltic Sea: fish farming or breeding in the sea, reclamation of land areas from the sea, extraction of mineral or organic substances from the seabed, installation of wind farms, installation of seaports or inland ports (including fishing ports, loading or unloading terminals), for ships with a carrying capacity of less than 1,350 tons, or when an area of 0.5 ha or more is installed in the water area and on land), dredging of the water areas of seaports; for gas supply pipelines, construction or installation of anti-erosion seashore structures or facilities that can change the seashore, etc. (EIA Law, Annex 2).

The Law on territorial planning of the Republic of Lithuania (1995) is also related to the legal regulation of the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea, which regulates the territorial planning of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone in the Baltic Sea, and determines the rights and responsibilities of the persons participating in this process. The purpose of this law is to ensure the harmonious development of territories and rational urbanization, by establishing the requirements for the systematicity of territorial planning process decisions, the compatibility and mutual impact of documents at different levels, to create conditions for the harmony of the natural and anthropogenic environment, urban quality, while preserving the valuable landscape, biological diversity, natural and cultural heritage values.

The implementation of the EU Baltic Sea region strategy in Lithuania

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008) sets out a common European Union (EU) approach and objectives for the prevention, protection and conservation of the marine environment in view of the pressures and impacts of damaging human activities, while allowing for its sustainable use, by means of an ecosystem-based approach (Strategy for the marine environment, 2023).

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive is implemented by the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In Lithuania, the Environmental Protection Agency was appointed the responsible institution for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by the Ministry of the Environment. By Resolution No. 1264 of August 25, 2010 (updated 29 August 2012), the Lithuanian government approved the Baltic Sea environmental protection strategy, the goal of which was to achieve and/or maintain a good state of the Baltic Sea environment until 2020: to protect and preserve the marine environment, to prevent its deterioration and, if possible, to restore it marine ecosystems in water areas where this environment is negatively affected and to prevent or reduce pollution entering the marine

environment to ensure that marine biodiversity, marine ecosystems, human health or legitimate use of the marine environment are not affected or at significant risk.

The strategy for the protection of the Baltic Sea contained 5 defined goals, tasks and evaluation criteria for the implementation of the goals:

· to strive for an ecosystem-based approach to the management of marine environmental protection, ensuring that the impact of human activities does not prevent the achievement or maintenance of good environmental status of the Baltic Sea and that the capacity of marine ecosystems to respond to human-induced changes is not undermined, while creating the conditions for the current and future generations could use marine resources and marine services sustainably;

· to reduce the entry of nutrients into the marine environment by 2016, so that human-caused eutrophication is reduced in the marine area and does not have a negative impact on the environment;

· strive to ensure that the concentration of dangerous chemicals in the Baltic Sea does not cause pollution and negative changes in ecosystems;

· to achieve an adequate level of preservation of the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea;

· strive for shipping and other economic activities in the Baltic Sea to be carried out in an environmentally friendly manner (Ministry of the Environment, 2010).

Presently, this document is regulating the mentioned strategy and there is no new strategy adopted in Lithuania for the direction of this field, and there is no information on the website of the Environmental Protection Agency about any preparation of a new strategy for the protection of the environment of the Baltic Sea.

In order to implement the goals of the Strategy, the 2010-2015 plan of measures for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Environmental Protection Strategy was approved by order of the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (2010). For example, in order to improve the management of marine environmental protection, applying an ecosystem-based approach, the measures for the implementation of this goal were foreseen:

- a description of the procedure for determining the state of the marine environment,
- the characteristics of the good environmental condition of the Baltic Sea,
- the goals of marine environmental protection,
- the approval of monitoring programs and measures,
- approval of the state environmental monitoring program,
- assessment of the state of the marine environment and the impact of human activities on the marine environment,
- determination of the characteristics of a good environmental condition of the Baltic Sea,
- preparation of a program for monitoring the state of the marine environment,
- preparation of a draft amendment to the Baltic Sea Environmental Protection Strategy and its implementation measures plan,
- closer cooperation with other countries located in the Baltic Sea area and basin on issues of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea, etc.

The legal act mentioned is the last (most recent) legal act listing detailed measures to be taken in the Baltic Sea for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Environmental Protection Strategy, there were no more documents adopted on this question.

The Environmental Protection Agency (2020) reviewed and submitted to the European Commission an updated environmental monitoring program of the Baltic Sea prepared in accordance with the requirements of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This update of the monitoring program aims to implement the main objective of the directive - to improve

the state of the sea. The Environmental Protection Agency (2020) stresses that the monitoring of the Baltic Sea, which has been carried out for more than one decade, allows to assess the trends and changes of eutrophication, pollution by chemical substances, some biological components (for example, fish, birds). The implementation of the Marine Directive has increased the need for data, as well as the scope of monitoring, including monitoring of marine litter, underwater noise, seabed habitats, seabirds wintering in the open sea, and non-native species.

The assessment of the condition of the Baltic Sea carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency (2020) showed that the improvement of the condition of the sea is observed only according to a few indicators (e.g. pollution by oil products, pesticides, etc.), but there are no fundamental changes, problems remain relevant in the areas of biodiversity, eutrophication caused by human economic activity, fish stocks and other areas. The main impacts include pollution from the sea basin, shipping, port activities, fishing, tourism, coastal industry. Sea monitoring is an important source of data for setting water protection goals, selecting measures to improve the condition and evaluating the effectiveness of measures. By the end of 2022, in accordance with the Marine Directive, all EU countries must update programs of measures to achieve a good state of the marine environment. As mentioned, for the moment there is no public information about such actions.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008) establishes an obligation to report to the European Commission every six years. The most recent evaluation has been carried out in 2018. The experts of the European Commission have evaluated Lithuanian progress since 2012 evaluation. The evaluation includes different categories (or descriptors), such as ‘Non-indigenous species’, ‘Euthrophication’, ‘Hydrographical changes’, ‘Contaminants’, ‘Contaminants in seafood’, ‘Marine litter’, ‘Energy, incl. underwater noise’, ‘Biodiversity’, ‘Commercial fish and shellfish’ etc. Lithuania has increased its scores in most of the categories, in comparison with the 2012 evaluation. (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, technical assessment, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the legal regulation of the Baltic Sea environmental protection at the national level, it can be stated that the Baltic Sea environmental protection is regulated by various national laws related to environmental protection, preservation of protected areas, protection of wildlife and wild fauna, protection of marine environment etc. It should be noted that Lithuania implements the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region according to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The Environmental Protection Agency is assigned to the implementation of this directive. The Lithuanian strategy for the protection of the Baltic Sea contains the objectives, tasks and evaluation criteria for the implementation of the objectives for the protection of the environment of the Baltic Sea. The 2010-2015 plan of measures for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Environmental Protection Strategy was used to implement the strategy's goals. Presently the updated monitoring plan for the Baltic Sea was submitted to the European Commission, and the preparation of the new strategy for the Baltic Sea will be underway in the near future.

It can be seen that the Law of the Sea Convention, the Helsinki Convention, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region and other international agreements and EU directives are implemented through national legal acts, which form a comprehensive legal regulatory mechanism for the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea.

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