

Title: Biodiversea LIFE-IP – enhancing the marine biodiversity of the Baltic Sea in Finland and promoting the sustainable use of marine resources

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Abstract:

Biodiversity loss poses a serious risk to humanity. To tackle this crisis the European Commission's EU biodiversity strategy set targets to protect 30% of Europe's marine environment by 2030. Currently many countries are far from achieving this target. In Finland only 11.5% of marine waters are protected for this purpose, and in the Åland Islands protected marine waters are even lower at just 3%. The LIFE IP project Biodiversea (2021–2029) aims to help tackle these shortcomings. As the largest collaborative project carried out in Finland to safeguard the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea, Biodiversea is striving to contribute to this ambitious, but necessary, goal in the most efficient and socially sustainable manner. The project aims to enhance the protection of the most diverse and valuable underwater nature sites and promote the sustainable use of natural resources in the marine and coastal areas of Finland. At Åbo Akademi University, we are contributing expert knowledge at varying scales, from genes up to species and habitat distributions. The project represents several themes including restoration, habitat mapping, bio-indicator development, and setting biodiversity baselines. The foundation species Bladderwrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*) and Charophytes (*Chara* spp.) are the main focus for restoration, whilst the undocumented offshore areas of the Åland Islands receive the spotlight for marine mapping. Overall, the actions of Biodiversea aim to aid in protecting and restoring the marine environment and contribute to science-based management.