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Methodology for coastal ecosystem valuation for facilitation of decision making processes.

In Latvia biodiversity is one of the main values the coastal sustainable development is based on. However, the coastal area is constantly threatened both by natural processes and anthropogenic load. Coastal protection is implemented locally, without scientific justification, almost always enhancing the erosion processes in adjacent sectors, complex and inaccurate legal and administrative mechanisms for coastal management combined with economic aspects result in an inefficient decision making and growing threats to coastal area. Therefore efforts have been made lately for improving the situation and leading to an establishment of a common system for coastal management and ecological restoration.

As a part of the process, the Association "Baltic Coasts" have started to develop a set of recommendations regarding coastal protection against erosion and other integral aspects of coastal management, such as economic, legal, cultural and social. Within the year 2013 an initial framework was developed for evaluation of the coastal ecosystems in Latvia and use of the obtained values for assessment of the planned actions.

The methodology, based on economic evaluation of ecosystem services, including cost-benefit analysis, was presented to the coastal municipalities and will serve as a basis for consequent development for coastal protection, as well as for enhancement of understanding of coastal processes, need for ecological restoration, and creation of a collaboration platform with active involvement of all the sectors of interest for facilitation of the decision making.

The further development and adaptation of the recommendations will be carried out within the following years as a part of EU LIFE+ programme project, to be launched in May/June 2014.