

<b>Title of the doctorate theme</b>	<b>SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF MARINE PROTECTED SITES FOR DETERMINATION OF CONSERVATION TARGETS</b>
<b>Brief description of the topic</b>	Identification of strict protected zones, site specific quantitative conservation aims and adoption of management performance assessments are crucial in reaching Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets. This thesis will apply spatial analysis methods on selected marine protected sites and associated networks to justify territorial zoning, estimate reliability of conservation targets across territories and provide implications for management effectiveness. The thesis should result in both, research publications on methodological aspects of MPA zoning taking into account important characteristics of benthic and pelagic environments (e.g. habitats, key species, functional zones), as well as applications of these methodological advances for coastal and/or offshore MPAs. Main part of the thesis will be desktop study based on existing datasets with major focus on their integration for spatial analysis. Missing or demonstration datasets may need to be collated in course of thesis where necessary.
<b>Requirements for a candidate</b>	Good background in GIS and statistical analysis, general understanding of marine ecosystems (biodiversity, environment, human impacts), willingness to work on complex and diverse datasets. Good English language is essential.
<b>Existing research infrastructure and support</b>	The topic is based on past research of the local group of researchers in biodiversity inventories and valuations of marine territories incl. their status assessment, designation for protection, identification of conservation targets (BALANCE, BALTIC MPA, MARCONS, DENOFLIT, HELCOM ACTION, PROTECT BALTIC, MSFD implementation). The PhD student will be assisted with needed expertise in different fields incl. spatial statistics. Access to all the needed software and tools for data analysis, access to the datasets and needed information sources will be provided. Part of the work can be integrated into the PROTECT BALTIC project (2023-2028).
<b>How the topic advances the research capacity of the Klaipeda University</b>	The thesis should strengthen the applied and interdisciplinary research of Marine Research Institute by integrating researchers from various disciplines and combining diverse datasets for marine protection. The thesis outputs should significantly contribute to further development of marine conservation and bring the research to the decision makers through justification of conservation priorities.
<b>Potential scientific supervisor</b>	Darius Daunys CRIS profile: <a href="https://www.ku.lt/cris/entities/person/ddaunys/general">https://www.ku.lt/cris/entities/person/ddaunys/general</a> Researchgate: <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Darius-Daunys">https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Darius-Daunys</a> Google Scholar: <a href="https://scholar.google.lt/citations?user=CPg7GPMAAAAJ&amp;hl=lt">https://scholar.google.lt/citations?user=CPg7GPMAAAAJ&amp;hl=lt</a>
<b>Potential scientific advisor</b>	Scientific advisor(s) may be appointed based on the methodology selected for the research.

