

# West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve

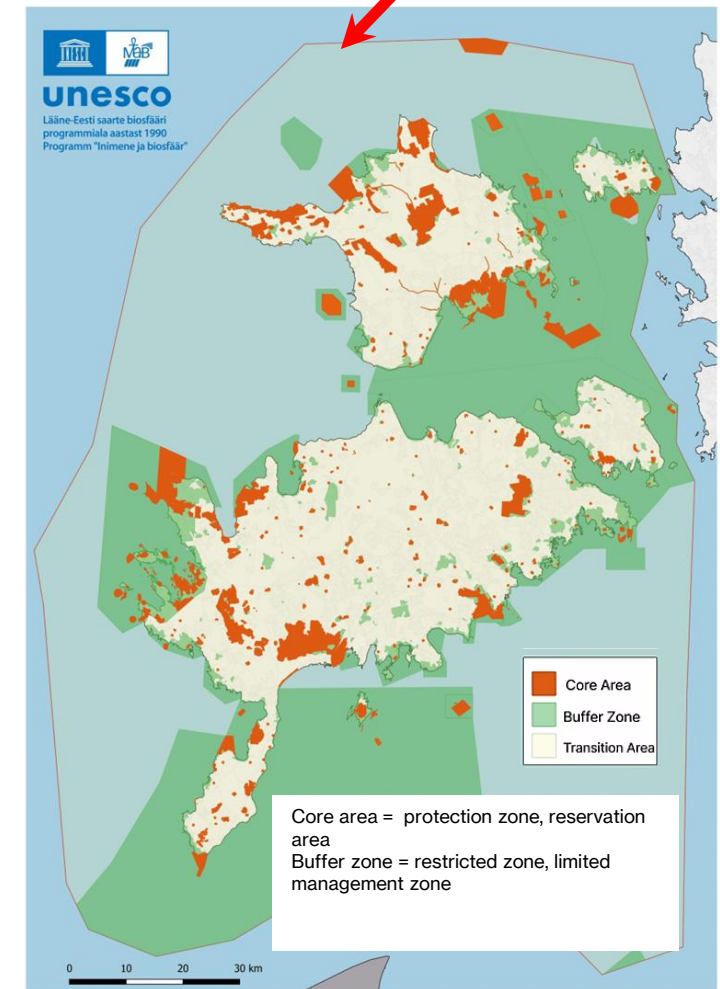


Liina Tabri  
TalTech Kuressaare College

# West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve

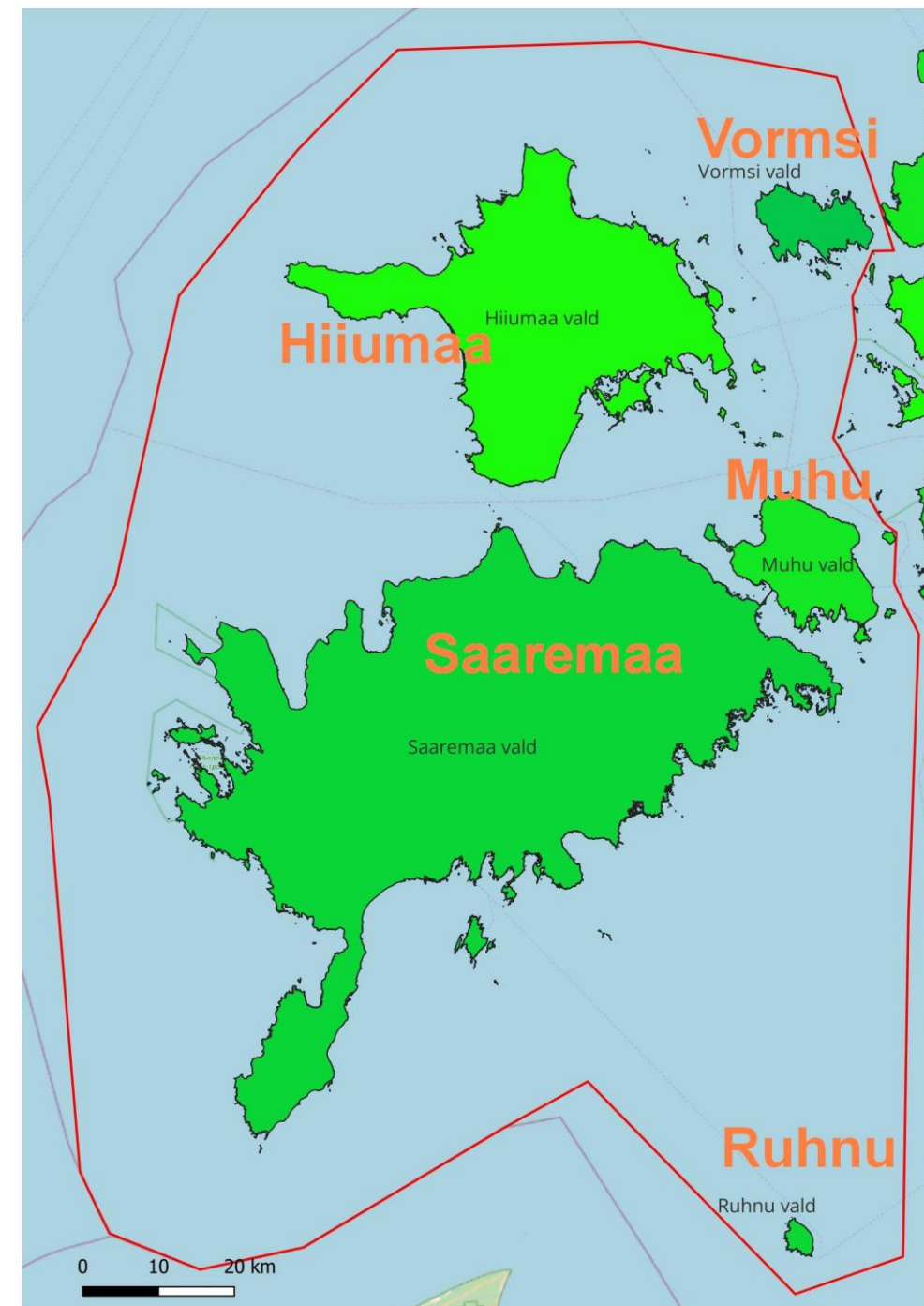
Since 1990, the biosphere reserve area of the West Estonian Archipelago has been part of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MaB) network, encompassing our largest islands – Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Muhu, Vormsi, and Ruhnu.

It is renowned for its unique nature, biodiversity, and traditional landscapes, preserved through sustainable lifestyles and environmentally harmonious economic activities.



# West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve Area

- The West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve Area is the **only UNESCO biosphere programme** area in Estonia.
- It includes **5 municipalities / island communities**:
  - Saaremaa
  - Hiiumaa
  - Muhu
  - Vormsi
  - Ruhnu
- The biosphere area also includes surrounding marine areas in the Baltic Sea, Väinameri and Gulf of Riga.
- The area combines:
  - biodiversity conservation,
  - sustainable local economy,
  - cultural heritage,
  - education and research.
  - [Video](#)





unesco

Lääne-Eesti saarte biosfääri  
programmiala aastast 1990  
Programm "Inimene ja biosfäär"

# 36 AASTAT RAHVUSVAHELIST TUNNUSTUST

- 30 March 2023: West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Programme Area council and centers approved
- Saaremaa center: TalTech Kuressaare College
- Hiiumaa center: SA Hiiumaa Development Center



# Two MAB' action centres in biggest islands – Saaremaa & Hiiumaa



# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF THE WEST ESTONIAN ARCHIPELAGO BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME AREA



UNTIL 2030



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2030

### 01. AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY

The biosphere programme area is well known and recognised among both local residents and visitors.



### 02. EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The goals of the biosphere programme area are integrated into educational curricula and activities, and research supports the development of the biosphere area.



### 03. SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The biosphere programme area serves as a pilot area for sustainable use of natural resources, green economy and vibrant cultural landscapes.



### 04. NETWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

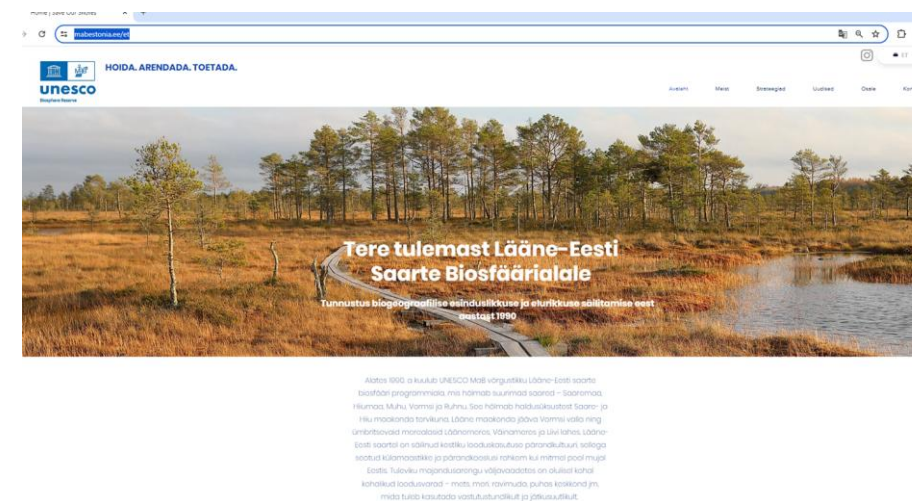
The management of the biosphere programme area is sustainable, inclusive and based on a broad cooperation network.



# Awareness & visibility



- Webpage: <https://www.mabestonia.ee/et>
- "Calls to action – 125 smart QR code stickers in various public places – 'Do you know where you are?' used to inform people that they are located in a biosphere reserve."
  - INSTAGRAM:  
<https://www.instagram.com/biosphere.estonia/>
  - FACEBOOK:  
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61574464424959>



# TalTech Kuressaare College

- **Saaremaa Activity Centre**

Coordinates the activities of the biosphere programme area on Saaremaa.

- **Awareness-raising**

Introduces the biosphere programme area to residents, learners and visitors.

- **Citizen science and nature observations**

Organises movement and nature-observation challenges and supports data collection.

- **Cooperation and projects**

Connects local communities, nature education centres and international partners.



# What we are doing?

- **Preserving Natural Habitats**

- to preserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of the West Estonian islands
- to conduct research to ensure the preservation of local species' habitats for future generations.

- **Education**

- to raise awareness through educational programmes

- **Engaging the Community**

- target audience - the dedicated local community who shares the same values.
- community events and volunteer activities to engage people in thinking and acting together to continue valuing biodiversity and embedding a green mindset in all aspects of life.



# What we are doing?

## Organizing events to introduce the MAB Programme area

Workshops, including:

- Birdhouse building workshop
- Insect hotel workshop
- Biosphere Day





## **Baltic Sea-related activities and workshops**



# Biosphere Science Day 23 August 2025



# Education & Science

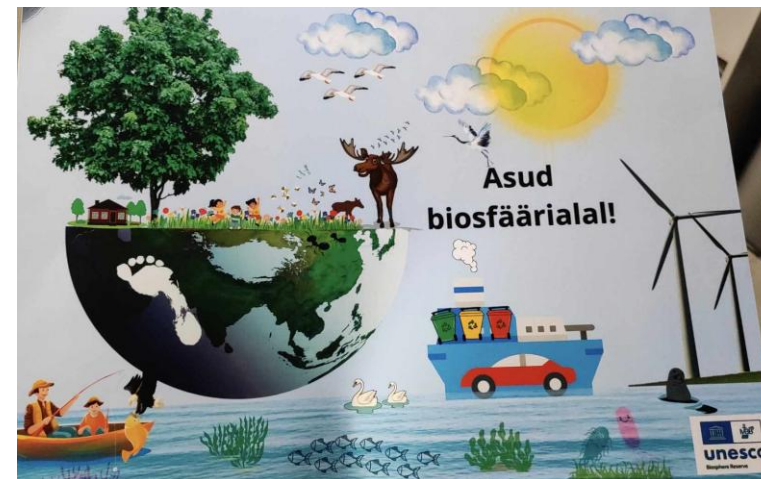
Cooperation with different levels of education – preschool, basic, and upper secondary education.

Some examples:

- **Pihlta School "Biosphere Day"** ages 9–11
- „ **Crazy“ Researchers' Night** (202 participants), ages 3–60
- **Guided tours at Kuressaare College** (303 children), ages 10–16
- **Teachers' information seminar and discussion**
- **"Sea and Environment" learning module** in upper secondary school

**At higher education level:**

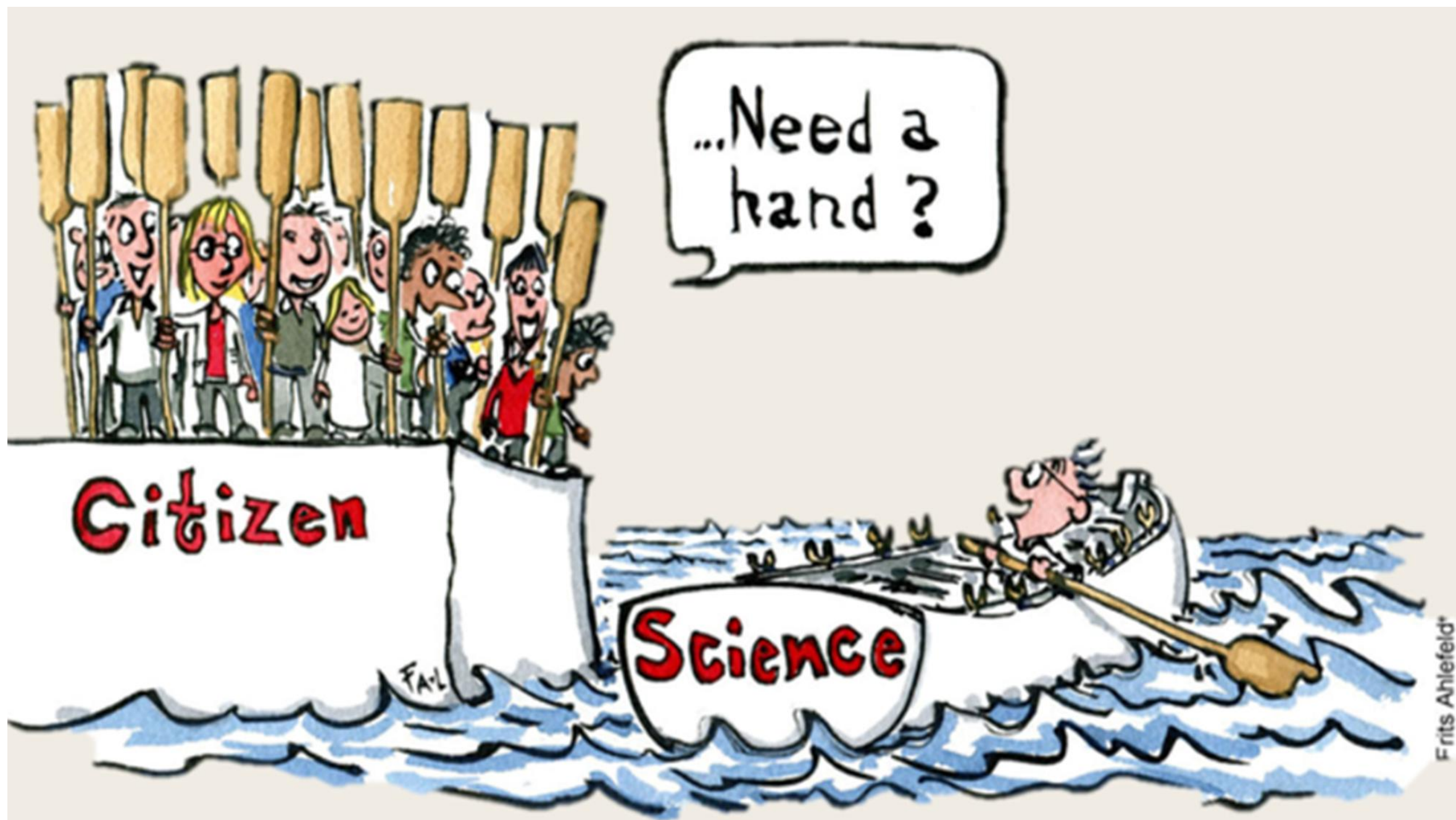
- **Blue Economy** bachelor's curriculum starting from the academic year 2024 at **TalTech Kuressaare College**



Pihlta School's "Biosphere Day" Creative Project




Renewable Energy and Biosphere Workshops at TalTech Kuressaare College



...Need a hand?

Citizen

Science

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a white t-shirt and a blue skirt, is seen from behind, walking through a lush green forest. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare effects. The path is surrounded by tall grasses and dense foliage.

**DISCOVER  
NATURE.  
EVERY STEP  
COUNTS.**

---

**JOIN NATURE OBSERVATION  
CHALLENGES**

**#natureobservation**

**Hiking and Nature  
Observation Challenge  
Programme 2024–2026**

# Timeframe and target groups of challenge

- March – December
- **For all nature enthusiasts**
- To highlight the value of beautiful landscapes and diverse nature of West Estonian biosphere area
- **to encourage residents to discover the values, places, and species** of our nature that they may not have encountered before



# Data collection

In collaboration with the Environmental Agency's **Nature Observations app** or **PlutoF**, available for download from Google Play or the Apple App Store.



1



Move in forest, near sea or in your garden with your phone

2



Notice and register the species around you, take a photo or video

3



Save and send your observation with special app



## Cooperation with Nature Education Centers

- Cooperation with the Viidumäe Nature Center within the LEADER project aims to create a local network and working groups involving nature education, outdoor learning, accommodation, and information providers. Through Viidumäe Nature Center, support can be offered and cooperative opportunities created for them.

# International Cooperation and Participation in Projects

*Adult Education in Biosphere Reserves: Learning Modules on Stakeholder Engagement and Citizen Science“ 2026-2028*

**The goal** - to strengthen the knowledge and practical skills of biosphere reserve communities in nature conservation and to increase people’s active participation in environmental monitoring and conservation efforts.

## Main Activities

Training programmes for nature guides and local communities	Practical fieldwork and species monitoring	Training on stakeholder engagement and communication	International citizen science campaign	Development of learning materials in Estonian, English, Latvian and Swedish.
---	--	--	--	--

## Project partners

TalTech Kuressaare college	Viidumäe Nature Education Centre (EST)	Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia)	North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve Support Association (Latvia)	Blekinge Archipelago Biosphere Reserve (Sweden)
----------------------------	--	---	--	---





# West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve



**Toomas Kokovkin**  
**Hiiumaa Development Centre**

## Objectives of the programme: strategy

GOAL 1: AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY

GOAL 2: EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

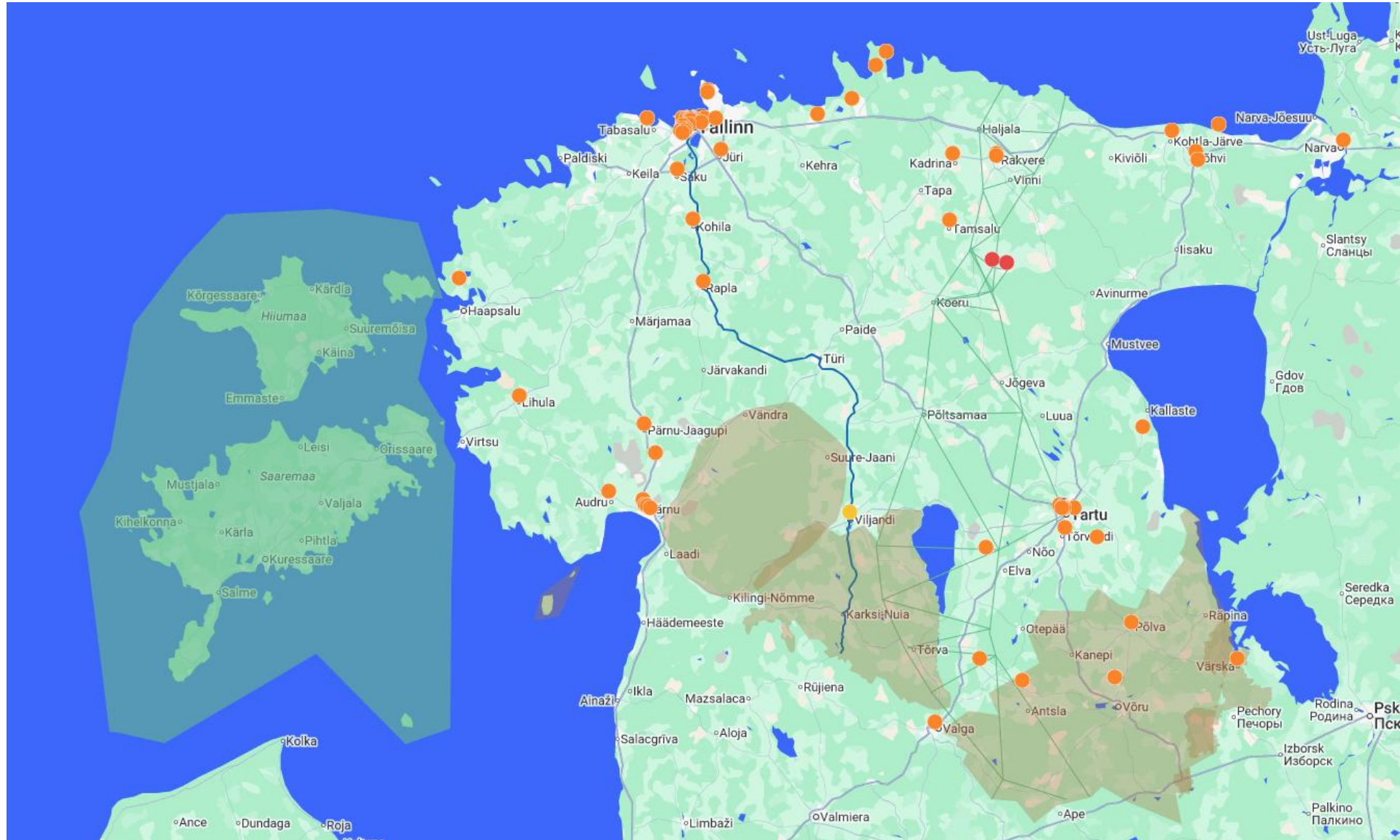
GOAL 3: SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

GOAL 4: NETWORK AND

GOVERNANCE

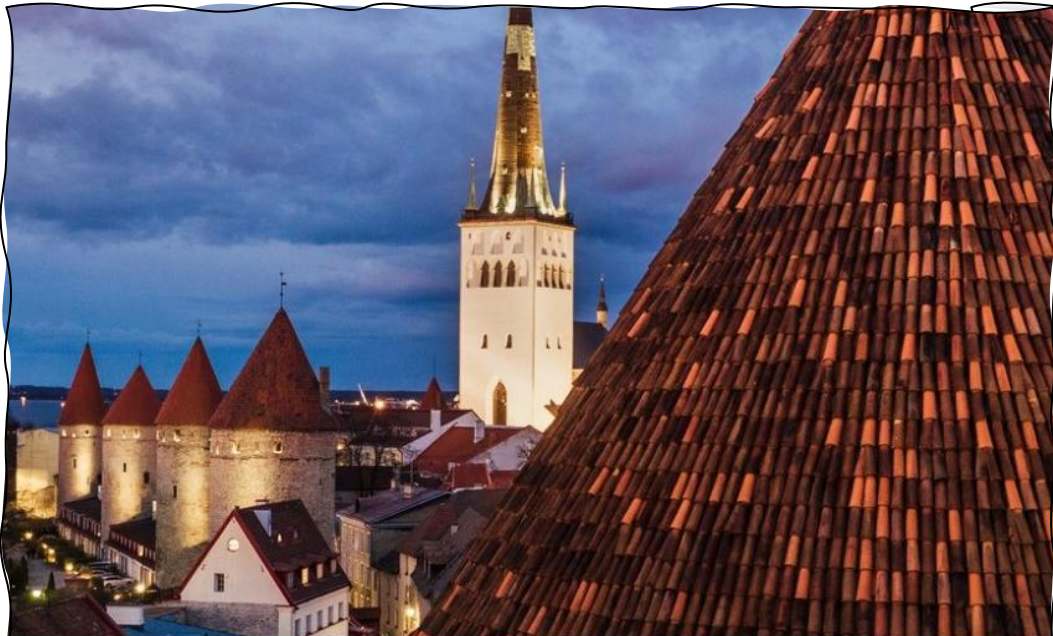


# UNESCO nominations in Estonia



# Visit Estonia: destination marketing includes UNESCO sites

Visit Estonia is the official national tourism brand and tourist board of Estonia



UNESCO heritage in Estonia

Saunas, dugout canoes, Creative cities, and historical memories...

UNESCO has listed 13 aspects of the Estonian culture and landscape deserving of preservation and international recognition in the following categories:

- World heritage sites
- Memory of the World International Register
- Cultural practices and expressions of intangible heritage
- Biosphere reserves ←
- Creative Cities

# Local programmes aligned with the BR strategy

- Visit Saaremaa
- Visit Hiiumaa
- Hiiumaa Green Label
- Green Destinations
- Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage



# Very rough self-assessment

- **What is working well**  
Awareness, education,  
green economy,  
international cooperation
- **Current gaps**  
Business partnerships,  
ambassador network,  
biosphere reserve  
governance



Anniversary cake 2025