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| Document title | Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance of the group |
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Background

The following HELCOM meetings that are relevant for the CG Fishdata have taken place during 2018:

1. FISHDATA 2-2018, Warsaw, Poland, 22 May 2018
2. FISH 8-2018, Warsaw, Poland, 23-24 May 2018
3. HOD 54-2018, Helsinki, Finland, 14 June 2018
4. IN BENTIC 2-2018, Warnemünde, Germany, 26-27 September 2018
5. SEAL 12-2018, Tallinn, Estonia, 10-12 October 2018
6. STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018, Copenhagen, Denmark, 22-26 October 2018

Action required

The Workshop is invited to take note of the attached extracts from the outcomes of relevant HELCOM meetings.

Extracts from recent HELCOM meeting outcomes of relevance for CG Fishdata

1. CG FISHDATA 2-2018, Warsaw, Poland, 22 May 2018

The Second meeting of HELCOM Correspondence Group for fisheries data (CG FISHDATA 2-2018) was held as a workshop on 22 May 2018 at the premises of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation (Nowy Świat 6/12 Street) in Warsaw, Poland. The Workshop was held back-to-back with the Eighth meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 8-2018) organized on 23-24 May, at the same premises.

The aim of the Workshop was to follow up on the progress made since CG FISHDATA 1-2018 and in particular to produce a joint overview of data availability, to discuss how to merge the data stemming from various sources and to identify tasks for how to improve this data.

The Workshop

- recalled the [Outcome of CG FISHDATA 1-2018](#) and thanked Poland for submitting Document 8, which accurately reflects the way forward agreed at the previous meeting
- discussed possible next steps for the work on the basis of data availability, information and data quality issues in relation to cumulative impact of fisheries on benthic biotopes as well as by-catch of marine mammals and water birds
- took note and discussed the information from the Contracting Parties on the present situation regarding *inter alia* quality validation analysis of national commercial data, national analysis on combining logbook information with available AIS data, considerations on to what level the data called for by ICES is available at a national level, present recreational gill net fisheries and descriptions of national monitoring schemes for by-catches of marine mammals and water birds in order to get a comprehensive overview of available additional data sources
- discussed the benefits of Automatic Identification System (AIS) data, which is mainly available for larger fishing vessels and noted that HELCOM has a comprehensive AIS database, which the participants were encouraged to use as appropriate
- also noted that Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) are very accurate but to increase frequency from once per hour to 6 times per hour would be likely to increase costs significantly.
- recalled that ICES has a working group that focuses on recreational fisheries, and agreed that it may be useful for Contracting Parties to keep in mind
- discussed that commercial gillnet fisheries have declined quite significantly in recent years, as compared to figures seen in literature
- discussed the reliability of data on incidental by-catches gathered from logbooks
- considered that reporting of numbers of birds could be a pragmatic option instead of requiring reporting on the species level, with regard to practical difficulties on reporting incidental by-catches of birds
- agreed that in considering by-catches, other human induced pressures (such as hunting) to birds, should also be taken into account and addressed at the appropriate for a
- considered Document 8 containing a draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea
- agreed that for any proposals for additional monitoring needs, the budgetary implications would need to be considered by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation before adoption
- noted that more work is needed to finalize the Roadmap and in this context discussed the feasibility of having it endorsed by HELCOM 40 in March 2019, as envisaged in Document 8, and further agreed

- that the matter is complex, and that before suggesting any concrete actions for filling data gaps, the data availability and data gaps are to be properly assessed as a first step
- took note of concerns expressed by Birdlife International regarding the possible delays in collecting by-catch data
 - agreed to invite comments to the draft Roadmap set out in Document 8, with a view to discuss and finalize it at the next Workshop as a living document, focusing on data availability and data gaps, and further agreed that the scope of the Roadmap could be broadened in the future to include options for filling data gaps and addressing the associated implications, such as costs
 - recognized the importance of keeping the Heads of Delegation informed about the progress with the work on how to increase data availability for the two indicators on by-catches and benthic habitats
 - agreed that FISH 8 could consider appropriate ways forward in that regard
 - agreed that the upcoming proposal for a revised EU control regulation and the revised technical regulations could also be taken into account in the work
 - agreed that templates will be prepared by Denmark and circulated to Contracting Parties by the Secretariat, as further clarity is needed with regard to how to present information on available
 - welcomed the offer by Denmark and Poland to update the draft Roadmap based on the discussions at the Workshop, and invited the Secretariat to circulate the revised draft Roadmap with the templates as annexes to the CG FISHDATA contacts, copied also to the contact points of the Fish group, with the request to fill in the templates and to comment on the draft Roadmap by 29 June 2018
 - further agreed that after collecting comments, a revised draft of the Roadmap will be circulated with a view for agreement and submission to STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 (22-26 October 2018) for comments that could be taken into account by the next Workshop before finalization and submission to the Fish Group for approval, and also emphasized that the Roadmap itself should reflect the need for a dialogue with State and Conservation on an ongoing basis
 - noted that three HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States have not attended the CG FISHDATA workshops and discussed options for involving all Contracting Parties in the work and invited FISH 8 to invite Contracting Parties to formally nominate members to CG FISHDATA
 - agreed that changing the status of the CG to an Expert Group would provide more clarity to the scope and methods of work of the group
 - took note of the information by Denmark on the ongoing process to prepare a project proposal under the recent MSFD call with tentative plans to include by-catch and seafloor integrity as topics in the proposal, which would support the ongoing work on these themes under CG FISHDATA and the Fish group
 - tentatively agreed that CG FISHDATA 3 should be held in late November 2018 with the exact dates and host country to be agreed by correspondence at a later stage

The outcome of the Workshop, as well as all workshop documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).

2. FISH 8-2018, Warsaw, Poland, 23-24 May 2018

The eight Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 8-2018) was held on 23-24 May 2018 at the premises of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation in Warsaw, Poland. The Meeting was held back-to-back with the Second meeting of HELCOM Correspondence Group for fisheries data (CG FISHDATA 2-2018) organized on 22 May, at the same premises.

The Meeting

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- took note of the Outcome of the first workshop organized as part of the activities of the HELCOM Fish Correspondence Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation, for the CPs which are also EU members (CG FISHDATA 1)
 - noted the Outcome of the second workshop, CG FISHDATA 2, organized back to back with FISH 8 on 22 May 2018
 - noted the offer by Denmark and Poland to update the draft Roadmap provided in Document 8 of CG FISHDATA 2-2018, as well as templates for providing data based on the discussions at the Workshop
 - invited the Secretariat to circulate the revised draft Roadmap with the templates as annexes to the CG FISHDATA contacts, copied also to the contact points of the Fish group, with a request to fill in the templates and to comment on the draft Roadmap by 29 June 2018, for it to subsequently be circulated with a view for agreement on a draft version to be submitted to STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 (22-26 October 2018) for comments that could be taken into account by the next meeting of FISHDATA before finalization and submission to the Fish group for approval
 - noted the comment by BirdLife International on the urgency of the issue and the importance of incorporating the data needs in the EU control regulation
 - noted the comment by Germany on the need to have a more specific documentation on seabird bycatch on the species level, in order to operationalize the indicator ‘Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear
 - encouraged all Contracting Parties to participate in the work of the correspondence group and, noting that four Contracting Parties have not participated in the work, invited all Contracting Parties to formally nominate experts to the group
 - invited the Secretariat to provide a proposal for the next meeting regarding potential revision of the group’s Terms of Reference to reflect all components needed for Expert Groups, recognizing this to be a more appropriate format for continuation of the work
 - agreed that the Heads of Delegations are to be informed on the progress within the CG FISHDATA
 - noted information on the ongoing process under OSPAR Meeting of the Biodiversity Committee (BDC), which in February 2018 had agreed that proposals should be developed for a workshop to examine needs and possibilities for developing indicators for incidental by-catch of birds, seals, cetaceans, turtles and non-commercial fish, linked to related work by HELCOM and ICES as relevant, and further noted
 - that GEAR 18-2018 had supported organizing a joint HELCOM/OSPAR workshop on bycatch indicators, including fisheries data issues, supported the initiative and requested the Secretariat to be in contact with the OSPAR Secretariat accordingly
 - that other relevant organizations, such as ICES and ASCOBANS, could contribute to such a workshop
 - an initiative by EFARO on exploring synergies in data collection between MSFD and CFP, which could also be relevant to the workshop, and, based on this, requested the Secretariat to inform both State and Conservation WG and Fish group on the initiative with the aim of having these groups contributing to the process
 - noted the clarification that the Fish group has a mandate to manage the work of the sub-groups including CG FISHDATA

The outcome of the Meeting, as well as all meeting documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).

3. HOD 54-2018, Helsinki, Finland, 14 June 2018

The 54th Meeting of the Heads of Delegation was held in Helsinki, Finland, on 14-15 June 2018.

The Meeting

- acknowledged that further development of core indicators related to seafloor integrity and marine litter continue to be important priorities for HELCOM
- took note that the Secretariat (based on GEAR 8-2018 and GEAR online meeting 2 May) has been finalizing a EU project application for a project with a general objective to contribute to the update of the BSAP and implementation of Programmes of Measures for Contracting Parties being EU members, and a specific objective to analyse the effectiveness and sufficiency of existing measures with particular focus on by-catch, impacts on the seabed, marine protected areas, and eutrophication, and further
 - that the topical focus has been selected based on the identified priorities of the call for the Baltic Sea region (biodiversity, disturbance to the seafloor, impacts from fisheries), and the most prominent pressure on the Baltic Sea (eutrophication)
 - the proposal by Germany that the methodologies applied in the proposed project to be such that they could be applied in cases of countries where less data is available, to include indicators especially for eutrophication and by-catch in the project and to clarify how the intended project links to the process of the BSAP update
- approved the submission of the HELCOM-led project proposal to the EU call
- took note of the presentation by Ms. Katarzyna Kaminska, Vice-Chair of the HELCOM Fish Group on progress concerning HELCOM data needs, including the development by CG FISHDATA of a roadmap for the collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea
- took note of the outcome of FISH 8-2018 in general and in particular
 - invited Contracting Parties who have not yet done so to nominate experts to the CG FISHDATA group
 - noted the initiative for a possible joint HELCOM/OSPAR workshop on by-catch indicators
- took note of a statement by CCB on the importance of the work carried out by the Fish and Agri Groups, and specifically for the Fish Group, the importance of the role of HELCOM in addressing fisheries-related measures that fall in between the scope of work of other relevant fora, e.g. Baltic AC, BALTFISH and ICES, e.g. fisheries/biodiversity interactions such as bycatch of seals, marine mammals and seabirds

The outcome of the Meeting, as well as all meeting documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).

4. IN BENTIC 2-2018, Warnemünde, Germany, 26-27 September 2018

The 2nd Meeting of HELCOM Intersessional Network on Benthic Habitats and Biotopes was held in Warnemünde, Germany, on 26-27 September 2018

The Meeting

- discussed aspects of interest for the group including the role of HELCOM CG Fishdata, noting that it was established to explore potential loss and disturbance of habitat due to fishing activities
- took note of the information from the Contracting parties on current and planned national work on mapping and monitoring of benthic habitats, including aspects of physical disturbance of the seafloor

The outcome of the Meeting, as well as all meeting documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).

5. SEAL 12-2018, Tallinn, Estonia, 10-12 October 2018

The twelfth Meeting of the HELCOM ad hoc Seal Expert Group (SEAL 12-2018), was held on 10-12 October 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia, at the premises of Estonian Ministry of the Environment.

The Meeting

- discussed the general need to increase the confidence in data on by-catch of seals reported by the fisheries industry, as there are indications that such by-catch is severely underreported, and concluded that an open dialogue with, and trust between, the stakeholders and managing authorities are considered vital to support the work
- took note of the information by Russia that there is no official management plan for the marine mammals in the Russian part of the Baltic Sea, and that problems are caused by bycatch in fishing nets in areas where half of the population is located
- took note of the clarification that the HELCOM OSPAR By-catch workshop is intended to work the more narrow scope of seal fisheries interactions of identified common issues related to development of indicators for by-catch
- took note of the registered mortality numbers for Baltic marine mammals from years 2008 to 2017, including data for suspected by-catch
- agreed to change the content of the mortality category “stranding” to include information on both the total number of animals found stranded and the number of those animals which are suspected to have died as by-catch in fisheries
- took note of the information on the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM workshop on development of incidental bycatch indicators and asked that efforts should be made to find synergies, and possible cooperation, with the ACCOBAMS&ASCOBANS bycatch working group to avoid overlap
- took note of the status of the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database, and took note that since the last meeting of SEAL EG, Poland has reported data on bycatch from 2005 to 2018
- took note of the draft proposals for amendments of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise, and after further updates approved the updated HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 and agreed to submit it for consideration of STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018
- took note of the list of Action Points agreed at the 24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting, including information on the work under the ACCOBAMS &ASCOBANS WG bycatch and their work on by-catch thresholds

The outcome of the Meeting, as well as all meeting documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).

6. STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018, Copenhagen, Denmark, 22-26 October 2018

The ninth Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018) was convened on 22-26 October 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the premises of of Ledernes Mødecenter.

The Meeting

- considered the technical changes made to the draft proposal of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise, as drafted and agreed by SEAL 12-2018, and noted the comment by Denmark that Denmark cannot fully endorse point a. of the recommendation, which sets targets for bycatch without differentiating between the two populations of harbour porpoise in the HELCOM area, and the further points by Denmark:
 - that Denmark finds this distinction important, as the state of the two populations are different
 - that Denmark agrees that bycatch levels should be as low as possible and should be close to zero for Baltic proper population, but that Denmark, however, cannot aim at a bycatch rate close to 0 for the Belt Sea population as it is large and stable, and since such target could potentially require a closure of fisheries
- took note of the information by Poland on the progress in work related to bycatch within HELCOM FISH and FISHDATA
- took note of the joined work of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS by-catch group
- took note of the ongoing work under the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of protected species
- took note of the annual compilation of registered marine mammal mortality, including data for suspected by-catch
- took note of the information on draft Terms of Reference for a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop for indicators for incidental bycatch
- took note of the Draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea, and invited CG FISHDATA to consider incorporating a timeline and with associated task deadlines into the Roadmap, and further took note of the information that it is possible to provide further comments by 31 October 2018 and invited Poland to present progress regarding the work at State and Conservation 10-2019
- reviewed the Draft Terms of Reference for a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop for indicators for incidental bycatch, and further
 - agreed that it would be beneficial to include references to relevant HELCOM (and OSPAR) commitments related to by-catch in the documentation for the workshop
 - noted that FISH and CG FISHDATA groups are missing from the indicated participants for the workshop, which should be amended to the draft ToR
 - invited the respective Secretariats to communicate with the ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS by-catch working group regarding the workshop to benefit from the work done under ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS
- recalled that the proposed project HELCOM ACTION under the EU 2018 MSFD call contains a work package focusing on defining high-risk areas for by-catch of marine mammals and birds and evaluating technical measures to reduce by-catch, and that the proposal is awaiting the funding decision
- noted the following (*inter alia*) identified needs and agreed to include them in the State and Conservation 2019-2020 Workplan:
 - to collate information on existing technical measures for minimising bycatch of harbour porpoise, and which of these measures are currently being used in the Baltic Sea, to support future evaluation of the effectiveness of measures
- took note of the information by Germany on current and upcoming activities in the MSFD CIS process as regards the establishment of a new technical group on seafloor integrity and the request to ICES as regards pressures related to physical loss and physical disturbance
- invited the Secretariat to explore the possibility of an EU Commission representative to present ongoing work at the EU level on marine litter, noise and seafloor integrity at State and Conservation 10-2019 with the aim of harmonizing approaches and avoiding double work

- took note of the updated indicator report and the ongoing developments towards a core indicator of the pre-core indicator ‘Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes’, and further
 - took note of the comment by Finland that there is a discrepancy in the conversion between the broad habitat types under the MSFD and the HUB for the class mixed substrate
 - took note of the comment by Germany that there is a need for further consideration of the classifications and delineations of physical loss and physical disturbance
 - took note of the information by Germany, that the discussions and evaluations in relation to human activities leading to physical disturbance or physical loss are still ongoing on national level and in the EU-MSFD-CIS, where expert groups are just beginning to deal with the issue, e.g. in the forthcoming TG Seafloor and in the context of a recent request of the WG GES and MSCG to ICES
 - took note of the statement by Germany that the categorization of any human activity into physical loss or disturbance needs thorough consideration as it can also have legal consequences in permission procedures
 - took note of the question raised by Germany whether the 12 year threshold is scientifically sound if recovery of the benthic community is possible after 12 years
 - discussed whether and how the recovery time has been considered in the development of the indicator
 - took note that Germany pointed out that some human activities may fall into both categories, loss and disturbance, depending on how they are carried out
 - took note that it is possible to provide comments to the indicator lead on cumulative impacts on benthic habitats, Torsten Berg (berg@marilim.de), cc'd to co-lead (Antonia Nyström Sandman antonia.sandman@aquabiota.se) by the 29 November 2018.

The outcome of the Meeting, as well as all meeting documents, are available on the [HELCOM meeting portal](#).