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# Outcome of the fifth meeting of the project making the HELCOM eutrophication assessment operational (HELCOM EUTRO-OPER)

## Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the minutes of the eighth meeting of workshop on development of core eutrophication indicators (HELCOM CORE EUTRO 8/2013, paragraph 5.4) and the 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HELCOM HOD 42/2013, paragraph 3.6 - 3.7) and the first meeting of the project making the HELCOM eutrophication assessment operational (HELCOM EUTRO-OPER 4-2015), the fifth meeting of the EUTRO-OPER project on Making the HELCOM eutrophication assessment operational (HELCOM EUTRO-OPER 4-2015) was held on 2 June 2015, as a video conference.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by participants from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Hermanni Kaartokallio, Chair of the meetings of the EUTRO-OPER project. Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Project Manager of EUTRO-OPER, acted as secretary of the Meeting.

## Agenda Item 1 **Adoption of the Agenda**

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1.1 The Meeting adopted the agenda as contained in document 1-1.

## Agenda Item 2 **Information by the Secretariat, Project Manager and Contracting Parties**

Documents: None

2.1 The Meeting took note of the outcome of relevant HELCOM Meetings as presented by the Secretariat.

2.2 The Meeting took note of information by the Contracting parties about relevant activities supporting the further development and updating of the HELCOM eutrophication indicators and assessment of eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, including the following:

- Germany: The Programme of Measures under the MSFD has been completed and public consultation started on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March and is running for six months. Meanwhile preparations for the second cycle of the MSFD have started. Work in the next years will focus on further developing and testing the new MSFD indicators, including indicators for eutrophication. Furthermore, Germany, in cooperation with JRC and UK is preparing for an “ECOSTAT workshop on Pan-European Comparison of Nutrient Boundaries used under the WFD”, to be held in Berlin on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2015. Analysis of the EU Member States answers to a questionnaire on nutrient standards for saline waters (transitional, coastal and marine waters) is still ongoing and Germany might approach individual Member States in the next weeks to clarify answers they have provided. During the workshop best practice examples on deriving nutrient standards will be presented and it is foreseen that the HELCOM TARGREV approach should feature as one of those examples.
- Sweden: The public consultation for the Programme of Measures has now closed. Almost 130 comments on the eutrophication section have been received. These will be worked through. Sweden reported that it had hosted several PLC workshops during the previous weeks, looking at, among other issues, uncertainty in nutrient load assessments. During the previous week, Within OSPAR, Sweden had participated in the previous week’s indicator development workshop in Hamburg and was presently planning the OSPAR COMP eutrophication assessment of Sweden’s North Sea waters, which will be implemented during the autumn.

## Agenda Item 3

### Defining assessment methods (WP1)

Document: 3-1.

3.1 The Meeting viewed the draft QA/QC guidance for EO data, submitted by EU, Finland and the Secretariat, and the invited them to produce a final draft by 30 June 2015. The final draft was agreed to be circulated among other contracting parties before EUTRO-OPER 6-2015. The draft may be viewed at the HELCOM Meeting Portal workspace for EUTRO-OPER Manuals (<https://portal.helcom.fi/workspaces/EUTRO-OPER-66/default.aspx>).

3.2 The Meeting invited the Secretariat, in collaboration with Estonia and Finland, to draft QA/QC guidance for ship-of-opportunity data by 30 June, to be circulated among other contracting parties before EUTRO-OPER 6-2015.

3.3 The Meeting welcomed the proposal of ICES to offer the QA/QC guidelines developed by EUTRO-OPER as part of the OceanDataPractices collaboration (<http://www.oceandatapactices.net/>), and agreed to investigate this option further. The meeting noted that the QA/QC guidelines for discrete water samples produced by ICES and agreed to be used by EUTRO-OPER are part of this collaboration.

## Agenda Item 4

### Setting up assessment data flow (WP2)

(No documents)

4.1 The Meeting welcomed Mr. Hjalte Parner's (ICES) presentation on the recent development in the EUTRO-OPER database regarding inclusion of coastal assessment units. The Meeting decided on how to continue the work:

- The open-sea and coastal indicators will be collated into one single table, with filtering possibilities to enable practical use.
- The acronym of CP as a second identifier for indicators, in order to distinguish them where specifications of indicator vary between CP.
- Indicators of same parameter but possibly different specifications will be grouped into parameter groups, in order to be able to produce the following indicator assessments: DIN, DIP, Ntot, Ptot, chlorophyll-*a*, Secchi depth, oxygen, macrophytes, zoobenthos
- The Secretariat will circulate updated specifications on how the coastal indicators are placed in the HEAT criteria (C1: Nutrient levels, C2 Direct effects, C3 Indirect effects), expecting response by 30 June 2015.
- The test assessment will be produced using the time-period 2007-2011, or the closest period with available data.
- The CP's wishing to use different coastal assessment units from those presented in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy in EUTRO-OPER (e.g. WFD water body types instead of water bodies) may do so, but are requested to send shapefiles of these to the Secretariat by 11.6.2015.

4.2 The Meeting noted the wish of Germany to also show results for the eutrophication parameters aggregated on a national level. These results could be depicted as coloured dots within the respective HELCOM assessment units. This way of presenting the data will satisfy the national reporting requirements under the MSFD and will allow managers to better detect eutrophication hotspots and tailor their measures to eliminate these. Germany will bring up this issue at the next HOLAS II meeting. Mr. Parner informs that an aggregation on national level may be challenging since some of the observations (e.g. from ships of opportunity) cannot be assigned to an EEZ.

4.3 The Meeting discussed the chlorophyll-*a* indicator update produced through the new EUTRO-OPER data flow with *in-situ* and EO-data, as presented by Mr. Parner. The Meeting reconsidered the method decided by EUTRO-OPER 4-2015 and that it disregards the *in-situ* data if they are of low confidence (<5 samples per year). Such an approach might harbour the risk of cutting down on *in-situ* sampling. It also ignores that confidence does not only relate to sampling size but includes issues such as temporal and spatial

variability of data. Nevertheless, the meeting agreed to continue using averaging, weighed according to status confidence and methodological error of the *in-situ* and EO-data. The decision will be revisited once EO-data coverage is achieved for the Western Baltic Sea.

4.4 The Meeting welcomed the plans of ICES to develop the interface between the ICES and HELCOM portals during June 2015.

4.5 The Meeting noted, that a solution for inclusion of oxygen debt indicator in the EUTRO-OPER work flow has not been found, and agreed to produce the test assessment using the existing oxygen debt results from the 2007-2011 assessment directly.

## **Agenda Item 5 Further development of HELCOM eutrophication assessment methodology (WP3)**

Documents: 5-1, 5-2, 5-3

5.1 The Meeting acknowledged that the EUTRO-OPER indicators on total nitrogen, total phosphorus, spring bloom chlorophyll-*a* and cyanobacterial bloom intensity have been proposed as PRE-CORE indicators by STATE&CONSERVATION 2-2015 and GEAR 11-2015, to be decided by HOD 48-2015 (Document 5-1).

5.2 The Meeting took note of the German comments on the new EUTRO-OPER indicators as well as information on the draft Baltic GIG phytoplankton justification revision (Documents 5-2 and 5-3). Germany argued that indicator development under HELCOM must strongly align and be consistent with developments under the WFD. This is essential because developing additional eutrophication indicators for the open Baltic Sea could potentially lead to assessment results that contradict the WFD assessment of ecological status and could hence lead to ambiguous signals to managers. Germany also argues that the current assessment of eutrophication undertaken in HELCOM provides already a good assessment of this pressure and that additional assessment parameters should only be included if they are essential for capturing eutrophication effects.

5.3 The Project Manager responded to the comments submitted by Germany (Document 5-2) by informing the Meeting of the following progress in indicator development:

- The development of GES boundaries for total nutrient indicators has been agreed to take into account the modelling made by Germany in the Western Baltic Sea.
- The data coverage for the Spring Bloom Chlorophyll-*a* and the Cyanobacterial Bloom Intensity -indicators will include the entire Baltic Sea, as informed by Finland in STATE&CONSERVATION 2-2015, and data will be available also for coastal areas.
- The Spring Bloom Intensity Indicator will be calculated using the HELCOM 20K grid.
- The Cyanobacterial Bloom Intensity indicator is developed with the intention of including the results of the present supplementary indicator on Cyanobacteria Biomass as a fourth parameter. Collaboration and communication with the PEG group has already been initiated.
- The method for deriving GES boundaries is explained in detail in the indicator report. The method

5.4 The Meeting took note that Finland supported both phytoplankton indicators, pointing out that especially in the northern sub-basins, the highest phytoplankton biomass is produced under the spring period, and will be disregarded from the assessment when using only the present chlorophyll-*a* indicator.

5.5 The Meeting took note that Sweden supported the Cyanobacterial bloom indicator, but was of the opinion that the connection of the spring bloom chlorophyll-*a* indicator to eutrophication should be strengthened.

5.6 The Meeting took note that Poland and Estonia supported both new phytoplankton indicators.

## **Agenda Item 6 Future work**

Documents: 6-1, 6-2

6.1 The Meeting took note of document 6-1 on the Road map for implementing the activities of EUTRO-OPER, and agreed that most of the activities scheduled under work phase 3 finalized or well under way (to be finalized under work phase 4).

6.2 The Meeting agreed to include a proposal on the continuation of the eutrophication work after the end of EUTRO-OPER, to be presented by the Project Manager at EUTRO-OPER 6-2015.

6.3 The Meeting accepted the revised Road map (Annex 1).

6.4 The Meeting accepted the list of project participants (Annex 2).

6.5 EUTRO-OPER 6-2015 was agreed to be arranged 8 September 2015 at 12:00-16:00 (central European time) as a video conference.

6.6 EUTRO-OPER 7-2015 was agreed to be arranged on 24-25 November, meeting venue to be decided in EUTRO-OPER 6-2015.

#### **Agenda Item 7**

#### **Any other business**

Documents: None

7.1 No other business was expressed.

#### **Agenda Item 8**

#### **Closing of the Meeting**

Documents: 8-1

8.1 The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting. The final Outcome of the Meeting will be made available in the HELCOM Meeting Portal, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.

## Annex 2 List of Participants

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