



Outcome of the 15th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 15-2020)

Introduction

0.1 The 15th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 15-2020) was held as an online meeting on 26 May 2020. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm and Chair of EWG OWR.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by representatives from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, and Sweden, Observers from Sea Alarm and WWF and an invited guest Ms. Nele Markones, Kiel University. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 Ms. Laura Meski, Assisting Professional Secretary, acted as secretary of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

Documents: 1-1

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda (document 1-1).

Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other HELCOM activities

Documents: 2-1, 2-2

2.1 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the 27th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2020) held in Vejle, Denmark, on 26-28 February 2020 (document 2-1).

2.2 The Meeting further took note that the proposed new actions on maritime activities for the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), including the new action on holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents, will be further considered by the HELCOM BSAP UP workshop on maritime activities (HELCOM BSAP UP WS-SEA 2020) on 2-4 September 2020, by the next meeting of the Response Working Group (RESPONSE 28-2020) on 3-5 November 2020 and will be for decision by HOD 59-2020 in December 2020.

2.3 The Meeting considered the proposed way forward by Sea Alarm on updating HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 on integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea Area (document 2-2). The Meeting agreed on the proposal and decided to update the following references to international guidelines after approval by RESPONSE 28-2020 and HOD/HELCOM:

- IPIECA/IOPG Good Practice for Wildlife Response Planning;
- IPIECA/IOPG Key Principles;
- EUROWA guidelines.

2.4 The Meeting discussed the importance of volunteer management, which is included in Recommendation 31E/6, but might need a separate recommendation, as it applies also for other aspects of marine emergency response. The Meeting was of the opinion that it will be useful to look into existing OWR

plans to see that the recommendation is in line with the plans and noted that some volunteer management guides already exist.

2.5 The Meeting took note of the information by the Chair that Sea Alarm will provide updated text for the HELCOM Response Manual Chapter 7 on co-operation in OWR for RESPONSE 28-2020 as part of the overall revising and updating the Response Manual.

Agenda Item 3 Update and planning/preparedness in Contracting Parties

Documents: none

3.1 The Meeting took note of the following national OWR planning and preparedness activities which have taken place since the last meeting:

- Denmark:

The new OWR management plan is almost ready. A meeting will be held in June 2020 with all stakeholders involved in preparing the plan.

Police districts handle local accidents. Twice a year two districts conduct an exercise. Due to COVID-19 the exercise scheduled for April 2020 was cancelled. The exercises involve the whole chain of stakeholders. Wildlife scenarios can also be included in the exercise.

- Estonia:

No major training exercises or events since the previous meeting. See further information on the Interreg OIL SPILL project in para 6.1 of the Outcome.

- Finland:

No large oil spill incidents have occurred lately. Responsibilities between the Border Guard and the Finnish Environment Institute (Syke) is unclear since the operational duties moved to the Border Guard. Syke will be called in only as experts. The OWR plan has not been officially approved. The Finnish Oil Pollution Compensation Fund is under review and WWF will likely not get funded in the future.

WWF trainings of volunteers have been cancelled until August due to COVID-19.

- Germany:

A meeting was held in December 2019 between responsible authorities and veterinarians to clarify financing. A framework plan for all five Bundeslander will be important. On the basis of the framework plan it will be possible to buy equipment, arrange trainings etc.

A scientific project has been conducted to understand the use of rehabilitation. A new, more practical, project has started including veterinarians.

- Latvia:

Latvia continues finalizing the National Plan on Oiled Wildlife Response. A workshop was held in February 2020 with national institutions, municipalities, NGOs and Ministries where the first draft of the plan was presented and a tabletop exercise was held. The aim is to have the final plan in June 2020 after which it will need to be adopted, possibly by the end of 2020. Latvia will work together with WWF Latvia and some other NGOs.

- Poland:

A legal basis for OWR has been established by an act of law by the Council of Ministers that makes it mandatory to include OWR in regional (voivodeship) crisis management and civil protection contingency plans. WWF Poland and a leading rehabilitation centre are involved in the preparedness activities.

- Sweden:

Plans on wider scale for handling oil spills exist. A specific guidance on how to respond to oiled wildlife should have been developed but has not been prioritized. The responsible authorities for oil response in Sweden are the coastguard and municipalities. The role of the NGOs is unclear. Birds can be euthanized in Sweden. Legislation unclear concerning rehabilitation.

Agenda Item 4 EWG OWR activities

Documents: 4-1, 4-2, 4-2-Add.1, 4-3, 4-3-Add.1, 4-4, 4-4-Add.1, 4-4- Add.2

4.1 The Meeting recalled the discussion at EWG OWR 14-2020 on euthanasia and agreed to arrange a half-day online seminar on euthanasia before the end of 2020 to discuss challenges and solutions based on scenarios. Sea Alarm offered to make a proposal on the content of such a seminar.

4.2 The Meeting took note of the information by Germany on the German project looking into the legal basis for rehabilitation and euthanasia. It might be useful to compare the legislation in the Contracting Parties as it might cause differences in the response or the legislation might be unclear.

4.3 The Meeting took note of the information provided by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland on nationally and/or internationally available wildlife equipment stockpiles (document 4-3 and 4-3-Add.1). The Meeting decided to keep the document updated (information available also in the restricted EWG OWR workspace) and to return to the document recurrently. The Meeting requested Contracting Parties, which have not yet done so, to provide information on stockpiles at their earliest convenience.

4.4 Sea Alarm will look into the possibility to extend the table with information on who will mobilize the equipment and use it in the field.

4.5 The Meeting pointed out that a relation should be made between equipment needed for challenging scenario's, and also a distinction needs to be made between equipment that needs to be in stockpile and equipment that can be bought when needed (from grocery stores etc.).

4.6 Synergies with EUROWA and the EUROWA stockpile in Ostend can and need to be made.

4.7 The Meeting took note of the information provided by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland on the involvement of NGOs in national and international emergency cooperation (document 4-2 and 4-2-Add.1). The Meeting decided to keep the document updated (information available also in the restricted EWG OWR workspace) and to return to the document recurrently. The Meeting requested Contracting Parties, which have not yet done so, to provide information on NGO cooperation at their earliest convenience.

4.8 The Meeting recalled that EWG OWR 14-2019 agreed to report oiled wildlife response activities to the Response Working Group using the Self Assessment Tool (SAT 2.0) and took note of the SAT reports provided by Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland (documents 4-4, 4-4-Add.1 and 4-4-Add.2).

4.9 The Meeting took note that also Estonia and Sweden will assess their current level of preparedness by filling in SAT 2.0 and send it to the Chair (nijkamp@sea-alarm.org) and the Secretariat (laura.meski@helcom.fi) at the latest **by 12 June 2020**. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to approach Lithuania and Russia with the same request to have a final progress report based on the SATs submitted to RESPONSE 28-2020.

4.10 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Nele Markones, Kiel University and Co-chair of the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES Working Group on Seabirds (JWG BIRD), on baseline data collection on seabird distributions in the Baltic Sea (**Presentation 1**). The study is not yet available but preliminary maps will be included in the JWG OWR report to be available shortly. The presentation demonstrated huge densities of species present in shallow areas of the Baltic, many of which are vulnerable to oil pollution. The data included winter concentrations, but in summer large concentration of moulting birds are also known. The Meeting realised that an oil spill in such areas may cause hundreds if not thousands of birds getting oiled in a short period of time, causing significant logistic challenges for a wildlife response. Ms. Markones

indicated that the data from the joined surveys are currently used in a project that aims to model the species distribution in the Baltic area. The Meeting thanked Ms. Markones for her interesting presentation.

4.11 In the discussion following the presentation the Meeting concluded that it is important to introduce “scenario-based response planning”, to make Contracting Parties more aware of the quantitative challenges of an oil spill in the coastal regions.

4.12 The Meeting noted the importance of including data on seabird distribution to situation awareness systems like BORIS (Common Situation Awareness System for Finnish Authorities Participating in Oil Spill Response), which is undergoing renewal, but was informed that data based on flight transects is not possible to include in BORIS.

4.13 The Meeting took note of the information by Sea Alarm and WWF on the formalisation of the EUROWA (EUROPEAN Oiled Wildlife Assistance) Network (document 4-1), and its aim to provide an international professional service for mutual assistance between Contracting Parties, and agreed to revisit EUROWA as a topic in future meetings.

Agenda Item 5 Training and information activities to support work of EWG OWR

Documents: 5-1, 5-1-Add.1

5.1 The Meeting took note of the information provided by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland on how various authority responsibilities are divided in each Contracting Party (document 5-1 and 5-1-Add.1). The Meeting decided to keep the document updated (information available also in the restricted EWG OWR [workspace](#)) and to return to the document recurrently.

5.2 The Meeting decided to arrange a half-day online seminar on early incident response in cross-border wildlife incidents on 15 September 2020. Sea Alarm and Germany as the organizers will prepare a provisional program.

Agenda Item 6 Any other business

Documents: 6-1, 6-1-Rev.1

6.1 The Meeting took note of the information by Estonia on the ongoing Interreg OIL SPILL project 2019-2021 (<https://blogit.utu.fi/oilspill/>). The main objective of the project is to strengthen the oil spill response capability in the Baltic Sea Region by enhancing cooperation structures, procedures and skills between and within the relevant stakeholders. The project will likely apply for extension due to COVID-19 until end of 2021. An online meeting will be held in week 23 which is open for participation.

6.2 The Meeting took note that a project proposal EUROPEAN Wildlife pollution emergency Assistance -2 (EUROWA-2) has been submitted for the EU funding call for Prevention and Preparedness for Marine Pollution At-Sea and On-Shore (DG ECHO) By Sea Alarm and WWF Finland among others. The project aims to strengthen international cooperation between authorities and between authorities and professional response organisations unified in the EUROWA network and will have the following workstreams 1) seabird impact 2) sea turtle activities 3) activities for the EUROWA network 4) authorities. The Meeting agreed to discuss the project proposal further at the next meeting.

6.3 The Meeting took note that Sea Alarm will conduct an update of the country wildlife response profiles from 2014, available on the Sea Alarm [web page](#), and will contact the members of the EWG OWR for this purpose in the coming months.

6.4 The Meeting took note of the list of contact persons for EWG OWR (document 6-1-Rev.1) as found in **Annex 2**. Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Secretariat (laura.meski@helcom.fi) on changes to contact persons for EWG OWR.

Agenda Item 7

Next meeting

Documents: none

7.1 The Meeting decided that the next meeting of the Group, EWG OWR 16-2020, will be held on 22 September 2020 as an online meeting.

Agenda Item 8

Outcome of the Meeting

Documents: none

8.1 The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting via correspondence..

8.2 The final Outcome of the Meeting has been finalized by the Secretariat and made available on the EWG OWR 15-2020 [Meeting Site](#) in the HELCOM Meeting Portal together with meeting documents and the presentation considered during the Meeting.

Annex 1 List of participants

Representing	Name	Organisation	Email
Chair	Hugo Nijkamp	Sea Alarm	nijkamp@sea-alarm.org
Denmark	Caroline Mikkelsen	Ministry of Environment and food safety	cvmik@mst.dk
Estonia	Agni Kaldma	Ministry of Environment	agni.kaldma@envir.ee
Finland	Pekka Rusanen	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	pekka.rusanen@ymparisto.fi
Germany	Uda Tuente	Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME), Havariekommando	utuent@havariekommando.de
Latvia	Laura Mazmaca	State Environmental Service	laura.mazmaca@vvd.gov.lv
Sweden	Nils Mårtenson	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	nils.martenson@naturvardsverket.se
HELCOM Observer	Saskia Sessions-Puplett	Sea Alarm	saskia@sea-alarm.org
HELCOM Observer	Vanessa Ryan	WWF Finland	vanessa.ryan@wwf.fi
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Invited guest	Nele Markones	Kiel University	markones@ftz-west.uni-kiel.de
HELCOM Secretariat	Markus Helavuori	Professional Secretary	markus.helavuori@helcom.fi
HELCOM Secretariat	Laura Meski	Assisting Professional Secretary	laura.meski@helcom.fi

Annex 2 Contacts of HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR)

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Russia	Andrey Bryksin	FBI "Marine Rescue Service of Rosmorrechflot"	
Russia	Natalia Kutaeva	FBI "Marine Rescue Service of Rosmorrechflot"	kutaevang@morspas.com
Sweden	Nils Mårtenson	Swedish Environment Protection Agency	nils.martenson@naturvardsverket.se
Observer	Saskia Sessions-Puplett	Sea Alarm	saskia@sea-alarm.org
Observer	Vanessa Ryan	WWF Finland	vanessa.ryan@wwf.fi
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