This revised document has been updated with information by Finland.

**Background**


Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Sweden have assessed their current level (in 2020) of preparedness for oiled wildlife response using the SAT version 2.0. Finland has also assessed its current level (in 2020) of preparedness but using the previous version of the SAT, which does not include [mass] euthanasia. The latest SAT from Lithuania is from 2016.

Further, a request to the Contracting Parties was circulated on 8 September 2020 by the Secretariat to update the information from 2017 on OWR activities, based on a template agreed on by EWG OWR 9-2017, with the aim to also have this information included in the EWG OWR report for the Response Working Group. Until date, updated information as only been provided by Finland and Latvia.

The attached document contains a proposal for an outline of the EWG OWR report as a basis for discussion at EWG OWR 16-2020. It also contains information from 2017 on OWR activities, which will need to be updated, except for Latvian information which is for 2019-2020. The most recent SAT reports, as found in the [EWG OWR workspace](https://www.helcom.fi/en/activities/docs/), will be included in the report.

**Action requested**

The Meeting is invited to discuss the draft EWG OWR report and to agree on a procedure for finalizing the report with the aim to have it submitted to RESPONSE 28-2020.

Finland, Lithuania and Russia are invited to assess their current level of preparedness for oiled wildlife response using the SAT version 2.0.

All Contracting Parties, except for Finland and Latvia, are invited to update the information from 2017 on OWR activities.
Draft report on oiled wildlife response activities and preparedness by the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR)

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Annex 1. Oiled wildlife preparedness self-assessment tool
1. Introduction

The HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR) works to strengthen the cooperation between HELCOM Contracting Parties in the field of oiled wildlife response. It acts as a forum for the exchange of information on progress and best practices and facilitates the creation of joint standards and cross-border cooperation in oiled wildlife response. Where possible, it also facilitates the training of national experts and exchange of training materials.

The EWG OWR was set up in 2014 with the aim to facilitate the implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 on integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea Area, and the objectives on wildlife response preparedness of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. The Terms of reference 2019-2021 for EWG OWR can be found here.

Meetings of the EWG OWR have been organized online two-three times per year.

2. OWR activities and current level of preparedness

This report contains an overview of the latest OWR activities 2019-2020 by the Contracting Parties and an overview of the level of preparedness for oiled wildlife response using the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) version 2.0 approved by RESPONSE 25-2018 as a reporting tool for OWR.
2.1. **Country:** Denmark

Report submitted by: Henrik Lykke Sørensen, The Danish Environmental Protection Agency

Report on self-assessment categories:

1. **Planning and integration**

The Royal Danish Navy is responsible for national contingency arrangements. Maritime Assistance Service holds the responsibility for managing pollution incidents. Danish Defence Operational Staff is responsible for aerial surveillance while aerial surveillance missions have been outsourced to Norwegian company Sundt Air. The Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) and regional or local councils are responsible for shoreline clean-up. Local councils manage pollution response in harbours and share responsibility with the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for restoration.

The Danish Environmental Protection Agency has responsibility for planning and strategy. The Danish Nature Agency has the responsibility for oiled wildlife response and field management. The primary oiled wildlife response strategy is field euthanasia. Birdlife Denmark can rehabilitate Species of special concern (e.g. IUCN or HELCOM Red List). If Wildlife rehabilitators are allowed to rescue and rehabilitate wildlife; this will be a local, ad hoc decision.

The contingency plan is under revision.

2. **Training**

Field euthanasia will be carried out by experienced employees or hunters. Activities will be coordinated by The Nature Agency. Dedicated training is not included in the contingency plan.

3. **Exercises**

Wildlife aspects are exercised as part of the national contingency plan for managing oil spill or pollution incidents. Oil spill exercises did not include wildlife response in 2017.

4. **Equipment and facilities**

Field euthanasia is carried out with standard hunting equipment. If volunteers are involved, ammunition for guns is provided. There is a network of wildlife rehabilitation centres affiliated with the Dyrenes Beskyttelse (Animal Welfare Denmark), all of which work on a voluntary basis. Present level of experience and capacity to care for oiled wildlife is not known.

5. **Partnering and funding**

Tier-3 resources are not described in the Danish oiled wildlife plan.

The following authorities and organizations are partners or stakeholders in the plan:

- The Royal Danish Navy
- Aarhus University, DCE – Danish Centre for Environment and Energy
- DTU Vet, National Veterinary Institute
- Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (Danish Birdlife Partner)
- The Danish Nature Agency
The Danish Environmental Protection Agency

Stakeholder processes have led to the agreed objectives and strategies for an OWR.

All main stakeholders are aware of the formal policy guidelines recommending the euthanasia of oiled animals. During an oiled wildlife response, stakeholders can be expected to effectively cooperate on the beach and apply predefined guidelines as appropriate. (Please report activities that have enhanced partnerships and cooperation on wildlife response preparedness, and report on enhanced funding schemes if appropriate).

6. Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them

In February a freighter ran aground near Fynshoved in the Great Strait. 200 birds had to be euthanized due to an oil spill. Local hunters and employees of The Danish Nature Agency conducted the euthanasia.

In September an oil spill in Aabenraa Harbour occurred. 5 birds were euthanized.

Latest Danish SAT to be included in the report as found in the EWG OWR workspace.
2.2. **Country:** Estonia

Report submitted by: Environmental Board of Estonia

Report on self-assessment categories:

1. **Planning and integration**

The Police and Border Guard of Estonia is responsible for national contingency arrangements in the Baltic Sea and the Rescue Board is responsible for contingency arrangements in seashore. The Environmental Board is responsible for wildlife response.

2. **Training**

No special trainings at 2017.

3. **Exercises**

Wildlife response is ordinary included to rescue exercises in seashore.

Table top exercise of the Ministry of the Environment, which included crisis management on ministerial level, was organized at 2017.

4. **Equipment and facilities**

Standard set of equipment and facilities is completed by the Environmental Board and Rescue Board.

5. **Partnering and funding**

New national risks assessment, included sea pollution scenario, was prepared by the Police and Border Board in cooperation with the Environmental Board.

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

No incidents

Latest Estonian SAT to be included in the report as found in the [EWG OWR workspace](#).
2.3. **Country:** Finland

*Report submitted by: Pekka Rusanen (Finnish Environment Institute SYKE) & Vanessa Ryan (WWF Finland)*

**Report on self-assessment categories:**

1. **Planning and integration**

   The national OWR plan has still not been formalized due to the uncertainties regarding which authority has the overall responsibility for oiled wildlife response. This is due to the fact that all operative oil spill response at open sea has been moved from SYKE to the Finnish Border Guard. The authorities are aware of the situation and are working towards a solution.

2. **Training**

   During 2018 and 2019, altogether 80 volunteers were trained for oiled wildlife response (3-day course). No training events or exercises have taken place since January 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions. Online refreshers courses are planned for autumn 2020.

3. **Exercises**

   There were no exercises organized.

4. **Equipment and facilities**

   No particular changes. Two firm rehabilitation centres, the mobile Bird Cleaning Unit and one light unit are included.

5. **Partnering and funding**

   The national OWR group includes eight partners: Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), WWF Finland, two local rescue departments, Metsähallitus (Parks and Wildlife Finland), Finnish Museum of Natural History (LUOMUS), Helsinki Zoo and Sea Life Helsinki. A meeting of the national OWR group is planned for autumn 2020.

   The national funding that WWF has received from the Finnish oil pollution fund to keep up voluntary oil spill response activities is ending in December 2020. Hence, there will be no national funding provided for oiled wildlife activities in 2021.

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

   No accidents concerning activities in OWR.

   Finnish SAT to be included after updating to SAT version 2.0. See latest SAT in the [EWG OWR workspace](#).
2.4. **Country**: Germany

**Report submitted by:**

**Report on self-assessment categories:**

1. **Planning and integration**

Response: Role of the authorities

The competent national authority for the management of major marine incidents is the Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME), Havariekommando, located in Cuxhaven. Here the Marine Pollution Response—High Sea Section is coordinating spill response at sea, emergency towing, aerial surveillance and international affairs on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Transport. The Marine Pollution Response—Coastal Section is coordinating response to spills in coastal waters and for beach cleaning operations on behalf of the Environmental Ministries of the five Coastal States of Bremen, Hamburg, Niedersachsen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein, which allows for a unified response. Onshore oil spill response, including oiled wildlife, is the responsibility of the five coastal states. Only Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are located at the Baltic Sea.

In Schleswig-Holstein the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas is the responsible authority for wildlife response. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern the competent authority is the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection.

A response plan exists for the Schleswig-Holstein part of the Baltic Sea (western part of the Baltic Sea). The plan includes guidelines and a manual for the technical and logistical implementation of the guidelines, which describe how the competent authorities will carry out Oiled Wildlife Response in cooperation with a regional animal welfare institution. In the eastern part of the German Baltic (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) a draft response plan exists, which needs to be finalized and, as in Schleswig-Holstein, needs to be further developed.

For major incidents in Germany a general response plan is under development which will describe the common approach for German oiled wildlife response.

2. **Training**

Training elements are e.g. collection and transport of birds, handling of equipment, health and safety aspects, communication and media (in major incidents CCME takes over the overall command of all response operations including PR work). The different tasks of oiled wildlife response are trained in special courses. Authorities responsible for oil response, animal welfare and nature conservation are conducting special regional and national courses to get prepared for their tasks during oiled wildlife response.

Oiled wildlife response (OWR) in Schleswig-Holstein is conducted by the oil combating department of the State Agency for Coastal Defence, National Park and Marine Conservation. Volunteers of the Federal Agency for Technical Relief, special wildlife response teams are trained in several aspects of OWR (laws for animal welfare, personal protective equipment, distribution of birds etc.).

A national two day course for all management aspects of oiled wildlife response in Germany has taken place in November in Cuxhaven conducted by CCME. Representatives of authorities for oil response, animal welfare and nature conservation from the different coastal states of Germany were skilled in their tasks during oiled wildlife response. Lectures were held by competent partners of authorities and organizations like ITOPF, Sea Alarm and Pro Bird.

Members of the German organization ‘Pro Bird’ (NGO) are continuously skilled in special courses of the EUROWA module (www.oiledwildlife.eu/eurowa). The suite of EUROWA modular courses, developed by the EUROWA project partners, build on the basic training created in 2012-2013 for initial first aid of oiled wildlife.
The new EUROWA courses include four additional levels (‘advanced’, ‘specialist’, ‘section head’ and ‘manager’) each produced in a modular form and consisting of a combination of online testing prior to admission to any of the higher level training courses. There are also course packages which combine lectures, hands-on training, skill labs, exercises and evaluation of individual skills. A pilot project to begin integration of wildlife rescue into oil spill response in Arctic Russia included a two-day EUROWA Basic Responder Course, which took place in Russia in August 2017. Elements from the EUROWA Basic Responder Course have been used in a large scale exercise organized in the Dutch Wadden Sea, which took place in early September 2017.

3. Exercises

Exercises for oil response already include special elements of OWR in some coastal states of Germany. Other coastal states are busy planning such exercises (e.g. Lower Saxony). In Schleswig-Holstein OWR is conducted by the oil combating department of the State Agency for Coastal Defence, National Park and Marine Conservation. Together with the Federal Agency for Technical Relief, special wildlife response teams were created that were trained as part of major oil response exercises in May 2017.

Also a table top exercise was conducted in May by the oil combating department of the State Agency for Coastal Defence, National Park and Marine Conservation involving CCME were aspects of OWR included.

4. Equipment and facilities

Personal protection equipment, to ensure health and safety requirements, is available regionally. Cooperation between NGO’s and authorities is under development. Regional wildlife rehabilitation centres hold equipment and capabilities for limited response.

The competent authority for oil response in Schleswig-Holstein (Oil combating department of the State Agency for Coastal Defence, National Park and Marine Conservation) established special containers consisting equipment for first response to OWR. Other coastal states planning to follow this example.

5. Partnering and funding

Germany is a signatory to the Bonn Agreement, Helsinki Convention, DenGerNeth (Denmark Germany Netherlands) Agreement for response in the Wadden Sea and part of the North Sea, SweDenGer (Sweden Denmark Germany) for response in the southwestern Baltic and a bilateral agreement with Poland for response in the Pomeranian Bight. Via the Baltic Sea Action Plan adopted in 2007 the contracting parties agreed to integrate the subject of oiled wildlife response into oil pollution contingency plans either on a national or sub-national/local level.

Cooperation between Federal Coastal States in Germany has improved during the last decade. Regular exchange of information (meetings twice a year) between competent authorities (and CCME) is now standard in order to be prepared for Oiled Wildlife Response.

6. Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them

Latest German SAT to be included in the report as found in the **EWG OWR workspace**.
2.5. **Country:** Latvia

*Report submitted by:* State Environmental Service

**Report on self-assessment categories:**

1. **Planning and integration**

   National Oiled Wildlife Response plan (Plan) is developed and meetings with stakeholders and NGO were carried in the process. Process of submission of the Plan to responsible ministry for adoption is ongoing.

2. **Training**

   There have not been trainings regarding Oiled wildlife response in Latvia in 2019-2020.

3. **Exercises**

   Oiled wildlife response was part of tabletop exercise organised within the INTERREG BSR project OILSPILL (Enhancing oil spill response capability in the Baltic Sea Region) in municipality of Mersrags in August 2019.

4. **Equipment and facilities**

   No specialized permanent oiled wildlife rescue/rehabilitation facilities exist in Latvia.

5. **Partnering and funding**

   As there is no rescue/rehabilitation equipment and facilities of oiled wildlife and Latvia rely on possibility to seek for help from abroad. However, there is no established procedure for assistance requesting and its funding.

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

   There were no accidents resulting oiled wildlife in Latvia in 2019-2020.

*Latest Latvian SAT to be included in the report as found in the [EWG OWR workspace](#).*
2.6. **Country:** Lithuania

**Report submitted by:**

**Report on self-assessment categories:**

1. **Planning and integration**
   (Please report progress in plan development and implementation)

2. **Training**
   (Please report wildlife dedicated training events)

3. **Exercises**
   (Please report wildlife dedicated exercises (table top, field exercise))

4. **Equipment and facilities**
   (Please report activities that have enhanced the status of wildlife dedicated equipment and facilities)

5. **Partnering and funding**
   (Please report activities that have enhanced partnerships and cooperation on wildlife response preparedness, and report on enhanced funding schemes if appropriate)

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

Lithuanian SAT to be included after updating to SAT version 2.0. See latest SAT in the [EWG OWR workspace](#).
2.7. Country: Poland

Report submitted by: The revised self-assessment and the country profile to the Report have been prepared by the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Ministry of Environment and WWF Poland.

Report on self-assessment categories:

Planning and integration

The Ministry of Environment has organized preliminary meetings with potential stakeholders concerning establishing the national OWR plan (legal basis, scientific analysis, preventive system, provide for the risk of oil spills in Crisis Management plans, trainings, financing system, appointment of the coordinator).

All relevant authorities have been identified and a Working Group for rescue of oiled wildlife has been established. The group consists of the representatives of Polish government institutions (Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of the Interior and Administration, General Directorate for Environmental Protection, National Water Management Authority), municipal authorities (Voivodeship Offices), Maritime Offices, Maritime Search And Rescue Service, Veterinary Inspection, Wildlife Rescue Centre ‘Ostoja’, WWF Poland and LOTOS Petrobaltic S.A.

A draft of a national OWR plan has been prepared, but it has not been formally endorsed. Nonetheless it should be noted, that there is no need for a formal (legal) acceptance of the document, because 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.

Training

First exercises and study tours, organized by WWF Poland, had an ad-hoc character. Although no national OWR plan has been formally accepted, it has been since agreed and written down in the plan that exercises should take place biannually.

For coherency, exercises and training events are jointly described below, since they are often held back to back.

The first event was a training course in Helsinki, Finland, in April 2014 for 21 participants from different, mainly environmental, institutions and organizations (WWF Blue Patrol volunteers, ornithologists, ZOO workers, veterinarians, representatives from the Ministry of Environment and General Directorate for Environmental Protection).

Second training course took place in Łeba, Poland, in October 2014 and brought together about 150 participants, mainly WWF Blue Patrol volunteers. The knowledge gained in Finland was transferred to Poland during this course.

In April 2015, representatives of General Directorate for Environmental Protection and a representative of WWF Poland attended a 2-day training event for European wildlife regulators. The course has been held by Sea Alarm and hosted by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) of the European Union in Brussels. The participants were brought up to speed with the state of the art issues of (inter)national oiled wildlife response and preparedness, including aspects of management, financial planning and administration and aftercare/claims.

In fall, 2017 a 2-day training course in Gdańsk, Poland has been organized by the Ministry of the Environment and WWF Poland. It consisted of two parts, a theoretical course and a practical field exercise. The target group of the event was veterinarians and volunteers (chiefly WWF Blue Patrol volunteers), but it was also attended by representatives of other fields (nature protection authorities, SAR).
In October, 2017 representatives of General Directorate for Environmental Protection and a representative of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation attended a seminar and training event in Helsinki, Finland. During the seminar information on national programmes and activities has been shared between the participants. The 1-day course has been focused on OWR management and was provided by Sea Alarm.

Next training event in OWR is scheduled to take place in 2019. In the meantime, in 2018 training will be provided (by WWF Poland) for those volunteers who did not participate in the training in Gdansk.

WWF Poland also translated the manual: *Oiled Wildlife Response Protocols in the Central Baltic Sea* into Polish. The translated document was published on the website as a teaching aid and distributed among participants of exercises.

**Exercises**

The stakeholders have been identified and most of them have assumed their roles in OWR. The key personnel has received diversified training, but there are no clear job descriptions written down. There are new parties interested in being trained (ornithologists, bird ringers), and parties that have already undergone some training are willing to continue broadening their knowledge and experience, i.a. WWF Blue Patrol volunteers, veterinarians from rehabilitation centres, national and landscape parks employees, nature protection authorities, Maritime Search and Rescue Service, etc.

The need for continuous training at different levels, from volunteers to managers, is recognized. Several persons from various fields (nature protection authorities, veterinarians, volunteers) have received training sufficient to train other local responders should the need arise, and assist abroad if called upon.

**Equipment and facilities**

The Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation declared that some of Polish harbours or fishing marinas could dedicate some space for mobile equipment and/or protective clothing storage (Łeba, Rowy, Ustka, Jarosławiec, Darłowo, Bobolin, Dźwirzyno). The Director of Maritime Office in Ślupsk can make a multifunctional car (for moving heavy equipment and removing post-washing oil contaminated water) available for trainings and OWR actions. The Director of Maritime Office in Szczecin has offered to organize dead birds’ storage and disposal if needed. Nevertheless, no analysis of the completeness of equipment stockpiles has been made.

Organizations and institutions interested in OWR, owing to the training courses they attended and the OWR manual translated into Polish, have necessary knowledge about required equipment and actions that need to be taken in case of an oil spill, but at the moment only small size facilities are readily available and ready to response to small scale incident scenarios. In case of a bigger incident, field facilities can be set up, equipped and staffed with personnel that received training. Such an arrangement is a conscious decision, based on an analysis of the past, which resulted in no records of serious oil spill events on the Polish coast. Due to a general improvement of maritime regulations and traffic, even the number of recorded accidental oiled wildlife cases (usually bird carcasses) found on the shore line has significantly declined. Therefore, it was deemed a better use of the very limited resources to dedicate them to training personnel and focusing on tightening cooperation between different parties engaged in OWR, than pouring them into equipment, which would have small chance of being used but would generate further costs (maintenance).

**Partnering and funding**

Oil exploration and production company LOTOS and the Ministry of the Environment have agreed to establish a fund for some ad hoc activities (e.g. OWR actions during relatively small oil spill incidents). Thanks to participation in international meetings and exercises, quality tier-3 resources for response assistance have been identified and discussions on mobilisation procedures took place. Procedure for
mobilisation of Tier-3 response has been written down and incorporated to the draft of national oiled wildlife response plan.

**Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

A minor incident has been recorded on March 8, 2017 in Gdańsk. A small amount of unidentified oil (possibly leaked ship fuel) has been spotted in Shiprepair Yard, Gdańsk. 3 specimens of Mute Swan have been affected. The spill has been handled by the Port Fire Brigade, Maritime Office in Gdynia and Port of Gdynia Authority. The birds were first spotted at 6:30 am close to the spill area and in the following several hours were caught (2 specimens by “Ostoja” employees, 1 specimen by a local bird ringer) and treated by the Pomeranian Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre “Ostoja”. The activities followed the rules of an OWR procedure (observation, collection, securing for transport, transport, intake, health assessment, first aid, stabilization, washing, drying, poisoning treatment, waterproofing, release).

**Lessons learned:**

- training is important - veterinarians and “Ostoja” volunteers having received dedicated OWR training beforehand were able to act calmly, purposefully and in an organized way;
- it took three separate turns of washing to fully clean one Mute Swan;
- the full treatment course (from intake to release) took on average 26 days (19, 24, 34);

it is important to remember that the post-rescue part taking place in rehabilitation centres takes a lot of effort, time and resources – it is also essential to count the rescue action as successful.

**Latest Polish SAT to be included in the report as found in the EWG OWR workspace.**
2.8. **Country:** Russia

**Report submitted by:**

**Report on self-assessment categories:**

1. **Planning and integration**
   
   (Please report progress in plan development and implementation)

2. **Training**
   
   (Please report wildlife dedicated training events)

3. **Exercises**
   
   (Please report wildlife dedicated exercises (table top, field exercise))

4. **Equipment and facilities**
   
   (Please report activities that have enhanced the status of wildlife dedicated equipment and facilities)

5. **Partnering and funding**
   
   (Please report activities that have enhanced partnerships and cooperation on wildlife response preparedness, and report on enhanced funding schemes if appropriate)

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

Russian SAT to be included after updating to SAT version 2.0. See latest SAT in the [EWG OWR workspace](#).
2.9. **Country:** Sweden

Report submitted by:

Report on self-assessment categories:

1. **Planning and integration**
   (Please report progress in plan development and implementation)

2. **Training**
   (Please report wildlife dedicated training events)

3. **Exercises**
   (Please report wildlife dedicated exercises (table top, field exercise))

4. **Equipment and facilities**
   (Please report activities that have enhanced the status of wildlife dedicated equipment and facilities)

5. **Partnering and funding**
   (Please report activities that have enhanced partnerships and cooperation on wildlife response preparedness, and report on enhanced funding schemes if appropriate)

6. **Report on incident response to wildlife and experiences/lessons learned from them**

Latest Swedish SAT to be included in the report as found in the EWG OWR workspace.