



Document title	Questionnaire on alternative fishing gears and fishing techniques
Code	4-2
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	4 – Regional cooperation on fisheries and environment
Submission date	31.05.2019
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

FISH 9-2019 considered a draft list of trialled alternative fishing gears or fishing techniques, which FISH 8-2018 had previously agreed will be considered as a living document. The Meeting noted that the list is not exhaustive or final, but rather provides examples of such gears, and discussed the purpose and target audience of the list. FISH 9-2019 agreed to publish it on the HELCOM Meeting Portal in a dedicated work space, where it can be continuously kept up to date by Contracting Parties and observers. The Meeting also agreed that before publication on the work space, introductory text should be included to explain the background, status and purpose of the document, including a disclaimer that the gears and techniques are not necessarily approved for use.

As offered at FISH 9-2019, Poland took the lead in the further development of the questionnaire, and Germany offered to help Poland in this regard and to restructure the document, including to draft the introductory text.

The dedicated Workspace on alternative fishing gears can be found [through this link](#). In order to access the Workspace and to provide updates to the Excel questionnaire, users need to be logged in with their HELCOM Meeting Portal user account.

When the questionnaire was published on the work space in April 2019, Contracting Parties and observers were requested to complete missing information in the Questionnaire. Comments were also requested on the introductory text and disclaimer. However, this text was accidentally omitted from the circulated email, and it is consequently included as an annex to this document, for FISH 10-2019 to comment and agree on, as appropriate.

Any technical problems encountered with the Workspace can be reported to the Secretariat.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the questionnaire on alternative fishing gears as published in a dedicated Workspace on the HELCOM Meeting Portal;
 - agree on the introductory text and disclaimer set out in the annex, to be published on the Workspace after the Meeting;
 - check if everything is reflected properly in the questionnaire and consider whether also trials on gear selectivity should remain in the questionnaire (the aim of these trials is to comply with fisheries legislation – discard ban);
 - encourage Contracting Parties and observers to continuously keep the questionnaire up to date on the dedicated Workspace;
 - discuss how to promote the questionnaire outside HELCOM (e.g. BALTFISH and BSAC), to enable wide usage of the information and addition of new information.
-

HELCOM Questionnaire on trials of alternative fishing gears and fishing techniques

The *HELCOM Questionnaire on alternative fishing gears and fishing techniques* has been developed in order to provide information on trials of different gears or fishing techniques with less impact on the marine environment than gears or techniques currently used in commercial fisheries. For the Baltic Sea, this is important especially regarding the reduction of by-catch of protected species of marine mammals and waterbirds as well as to reduce the impact of fishing gears on a sea bottom and benthic communities. Only trials which have been conducted in the Baltic Sea are presented because it can be problematic to transfer the results of a study to a different area or even another sea. The questionnaire may also include information on tests of more selective gears which may contribute to achieving the Common Fisheries Policy aim of having at least less discards in the Baltic Sea.

According to the advice from the HELCOM Fish Group, discussing and amending the *Questionnaire* since 2016, and previously, HELCOM BALTFIMPA project (2013) which set the basis for this *Questionnaire*, it was prepared in such a way as to contain all necessary information about a type of a fishing gear (technique) tested, fishing métier, conservation purpose of the trials, and most importantly, information if the tests were successful in comparison with the aims of the trials. It should contain also all necessary references and contact information to be checked for further information.

The aim of having the *Questionnaire* published on the HELCOM website with the use of online tools, is to ensure an access to the overview of different trials of alternative fishing gears and fishing techniques in one easily accessible location. The target group of the *Questionnaire* could be stakeholders involved in designing, testing, accepting and using fishing gears and fishing techniques including fisheries organisations, administration, scientists and NGOs. In case the trials have positive results, alternative gears or techniques can potentially be used in the Baltic Sea in the future for example in Natura 2000 sites, on condition that they are in compliance with the new EU Regulation on technical measures in fisheries¹, and accepted under the regional cooperation on conservation measures (BALTFISH).

The online *Questionnaire* is designed to allow easy updating and adding new information by HELCOM Contracting Parties.

Disclaimer:

Alternative gears and fishing techniques presented in the Questionnaire are in a trials' phase and not necessarily are approved for commercial and/or recreational use.

¹ Technical measures regulation - REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the **conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures**, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1343/2011 and (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005 - COM(2016) 134.