



Document title	Fish related actions from the 2020 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference
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Agenda Item	2 – Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance for the group
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Background

The HELCOM Stakeholder Conference focusing on the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) was held on 3 March 2020 in Helsinki, Finland. The Conference was organized to collect views from a broader group of stakeholders on key issues for the updated BSAP, including the proposal of actions to be considered for the update of the plan.

The Conference had four parallel sessions of which the sessions on Sea-based activities and Biodiversity considered fish and fisheries related activities for the updated BSAP, among other topics. Those suggested actions are outlined in this document.

One of the key messages from the Sea-based parallel session was the importance of a holistic perspective for all HELCOM BSAP measures by a social-ecological systems point of view, which is both cross-sectoral and incorporates multi-level governance.

The outcome from the Conference is available [via this link](#) on the HELCOM website.

If the Meeting finds the new proposals from the Conference relevant for consideration as a new action for the updated BSAP, additional background information would be required as in the format for synopses. This could be achieved either by drafting at the Meeting or contacting the person or organization that made the proposal at the HSC.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the actions of relevance to HELCOM Fish, proposed at the 2020 Stakeholder Conference as outlined in this document.

Actions on fish and fisheries proposed at the 2020 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference

The HELCOM Stakeholder Conference 2020 provided the opportunity to collect views from a broader group of stakeholders on key issues for the updated BSAP. Besides the plenary sessions, the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference also featured four parallel sessions on the main segments of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. The parallel sessions offered stakeholders the possibility to actively participate in the BSAP update process. The four sessions were: 1) Biodiversity, 2) Sea-based activities, 3) Eutrophication and 4) Hazardous substances and litter.

The parallel sessions sought to make use of the knowledge of HELCOM stakeholders to provide valuable insights and inspiration for the BSAP update process. In the parallel sessions the stakeholders were able to share their views on the BSAP update and propose recommendations, concrete actions or any other valuable inputs supporting the implementation of the updated BSAP. The synopses on fish and fisheries management that were previously been submitted to HELCOM (see documents 3-6, 3-6 Add.1 and 3-6 Add.2) were available to the participants that could provide comments to them, and also prepare proposals on new actions. The participants of the parallel sessions were furthermore invited to prioritize among the proposals through voting (each participant was to give three votes to the favourite proposal, two to the second, and one to the third), resulting in a set of proposals supported by a majority of attendants to the respective session.

The outcome of the sessions was presented in a summarized way during the closing plenary session of the Conference and a more detailed [outcome](#) was presented to HELCOM 41-2020.

Proposals for the updated BSAP related to fishery management were considered in the *Sea-based activities* sessions and proposals related to the conservation and restoration of fish habitats or reintroduction of fish species were considered in the *Biodiversity session*.

Fish and fisheries related activities prioritized in the *Sea-based* session were:

- Initiate the process to conclude a more complete set of criteria to indicate the health of a fish stock, besides fishing pressure and biomass criteria also including size and age distribution
 - Without a full set of criteria, crucial elements of fish stock statuses are missing.
 - Fishing pressure is clearly insufficient as indicator of a fish stock as healthy or not.
- Analysis of pressures affecting fish stocks
 - Decreasing fish resources and the difficulty in finding reasons for the situation (including eutrophication and other drivers) require additional intensive studies on stock status, including fish health/condition, population abundance etc.
 - It has been recognised as an important issue, but several aspect should still be taken into account/adressed, i.a.:
 - food web dynamics
 - all sources for mortality, human induced and natural, to the extend possible
 - seals fisheries interactions and parasite issue
 - interactions between fisheries and cormorants, including threshold values for cormorants

Fish and fisheries related activities prioritized in the *Biodiversity* session were:

- Transboundary management plan for critically endangered sea-spawning grayling:

- Jointly prepare, adopt and implement a management plan, covering the full area of distribution for the species, with emphasis on spatial and temporal protection of spawning areas.
- Aim: to improve status of the species so that it is no longer red listed.
- Strengthened cooperation between HELCOM groups and BALTFISH:
 - Establish long-term processes for collaboration, to ensure common understanding of key principles (e.g. precautionary approach, Ecosystem based management) and sharing of knowledge and information.
 - Aim: effective conservation measures for endangered species.

Additionally, the following prioritized action from the *Biodiversity* session may concern fish:

- Active restoration and restocking of candidate species (or populations)
 - Step 1) Identify candidate species/populations => need & feasibility
 - Step 2) Develop plan & measures for identified species
 - Step 3) Carry out measure and evaluation

Annex 1. Summarized consideration of fish and fisheries related proposals by the HSC2020

‘Existing’ proposal refers to proposals submitted to the Secretariat prior to the HSC during the call for synopses in 2019. ‘New’ proposals refers to proposals given by stakeholders at the HSC parallel sessions. ‘Votes’ refers to the number of priority stickers that the proposals received in the sessions.

Thematic grouping	Proposal	Existing/ New	Main WG	Comments from HSC parallel sessions	Votes
Parallel session on sea-based activities					
Fisheries management	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Establishment of no-take areas	Existing	Fish	-	0
Fisheries management	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Seasonal closures	Existing	Fish	-Better definition of coastal fish species needed. E.g., Species not managed by EU (TAC, quota, systems); -If we are speaking about coastal non-quota species, a big challenge is the lack of monitoring data; we would need better monitoring	2
Fisheries management	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Catch regulations	Existing	Fish	-Support for discussion on recreational catch regulations at sea (e.g. quotas)	0
Fisheries management	Restocking of marine areas with fry of European Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>)	Existing	Fish	-	0
Fisheries management	No further expansion of fishing effort to areas not already impacted by existing fishing activities	Existing	Fish	-	0
Fisheries management	Ensure effective implementation of the Landing Obligation (LO) As required by Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)	Existing	Fish	-Having cctv on most of the vessels [would] ensure better monitoring of fisheries, including bycatch	2
Fisheries management	Reduction of fishing pressure and development of Good Environmental Status delineation, supported by no go areas to determine benthic species recovery and potentially natural communities	Existing	Fish	-	1
Other (not measures)	Collect representative data on by-catch of birds, mammals and non-targeted fish species on species level	Existing	Fish	-	4
Other (not measures)	Agree to collect fisheries data on both large and small-scale vessels	Existing	Fish		4
Other (not measures)	Analysis of pressures affecting fish stocks	Existing	Fish	-Search for solutions on seals-fisheries interactions (including possible solutions discussions how to combat the parasite problem); -Important action in a current situation. Assess all possible reasons for mortality (natural, human impacted); -Including food web dynamics; - Including cormorant: establishment of a threshold value for cormorants; -Very important, as it is now, we are missing the big picture! For coastal fish stocks at local level, also the role of cormorants [need to be considered]	8

Fisheries management	Initiate the process to conclude a more complete set of criteria to indicate the health of a fish stock, besides fishing pressure and biomass criteria also including size and age distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without a full set of criteria, we miss crucial elements of the statuses of fish stocks. Fishing pressure is clearly insufficient as indicator of a fish stock as healthy or not. 	New		The original title of the measure as written on paper: Operationalize all criteria for commercial fish stocks (and non-commercial/regulated/recreational) in relation to GES/healthy fish stocks	3
Parallel session on biodiversity					
Coastal fish	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Restoration of coastal spawning habitats	Existing	S&C	[considered together with other restoration measures]	-
Coastal fish	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Enhanced protection of coastal fish habitats	Existing	S&C	-	2
Mammals, by-catch reduction	Mandatory use of Acoustic Deterrent Devices or other effective mitigation measures to minimize bycatch of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)	Existing	Fish	-Pingers/alternative gear, also on recreational fisheries	4
Mammals, by-catch reduction	Guidelines and regulation of the design and use of acoustic deterrent devices	Existing	Fish	-	0
Migratory fish	Prioritising mitigation measures in rivers for eel and other fish migration	Existing	Fish, S&C	-	1
Migratory fish	Restore functional populations of Baltic sturgeon by implementing HELCOM Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan	Existing	S&C	-	2
Migratory fish	Phase out all recreational fishing on eel by 2022	Existing	Fish	-Look at the CFP actions on eel and CMS action plan	0
Coastal habitats	Biomanipulation to remove cyprinids and sticklebacks and rehabilitate coastal ecosystem function	Existing	Fish, S&C	-	0
Coastal habitats	Strengthening piscivorous fish to rehabilitate coastal ecosystem function	Existing	Fish, S&C	-	0
Coastal habitats	Measures related to restoration of coastal habitats	Existing	S&C	-Restoration measures should be grouped based on Action WP2(?); -Prioritize areas: recommendation for methods combined with temporal spatial protection; -Strategic spatial planning for where restoration should take place; -Temporal spatial conservation measures to ensure that restoration is effective	5
Other spatial conservation measures	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Seasonal closures (coastal fish)	Existing	Fish	-	5
Other (not measures)	A set of 7 measures for coastal fish - Follow-up and knowledge sharing coastal fish measures	Existing	S&C	-	4
Other (not measures)	Establishment of a regionally agreed method for assessing in what ways loss and disturbance is causing negative effects on the marine environment	Existing	S&C	-Establishing trawl free areas in previously trawled areas to study habitat/ecosystem recovery	0

Mammals, by-catch reduction	Development of alternative fishing gear to replace gillnets This would aim to decrease conflicts between seals and fisheries AND decrease/minimize harbour porpoise bycatch -collaboration, sharing experiences, workshops	New		-Concerns fisheries management (sea-based)	0
Species	Transboundary management plan for critically endangered species sea spawning grayling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and adopt a management plan for the critically endangered sea spawning grayling, which is transboundarary, covering the full distribution of the species and with emphasis on spatial and temporal protection of its spawning areas. • Joint implementation with the objective of improving the status of grayling with the ultimate aim of the species being taken off the Red List. 	New			3
Other (not measures)	Stronger cooperation between BALTFISH and relevant HELCOM working groups (HELCOM Fish and State and Conservation including relevant EGs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: effective conservation measure for endangered species including a common understanding of key principles e.g. Precautionary approach, ecosystem-based management • Establish process for collaboration: continues meetings; HELCOM participation in BALTFISH and vice-versa; knowledge exchange, e.g assessment, shared prioritisation 	New			4
Species	Active restoration and restocking of candidate species (populations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: identify candidate species/populations for which restocking measure are needed and feasible • Step 2: develop plan and measures for identified candidate species/populations • Step 3: carry out measures and evaluate 	New			0