



Document title	Outcome of FISH-M 7-2020
Code	2-4
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Agenda Item	2 – Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance for the group
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Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

The seventh Meeting of HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH-M 7-2020) was held on 10 March 2020 in the premises of Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management in Gothenburg, Sweden. The Outcome of the meeting is attached to this document.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the outcome of FISH-M 7-2020 and consider the rephrasing of existing BSAP actions set out in Annex 2 of the Outcome. In addition, the Meeting is invited to:

- consider the discussion regarding the proposal by SOM FISH WS 1-2019 to establish a HELCOM Eel Task Force to develop a HELCOM programme to ensure successful eel migrations from the Baltic Sea drainage basin to their spawning grounds when considering the outcome of SOM FISH WS 1-2019. (c.f. paragraphs 3.3-3.8 of the Outcome);
- consider proposing a new action for the updated BSAP based on paragraph 3.11 of the Outcome; and
- invite contact points of the Fish Group (Contracting Parties and observers) to inform the Secretariat of experts to be included in the contact list of FISH-M at their earliest convenience, and to keep the list up to date on an annual basis.

Outcome of the 7th Meeting of HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH-M 7-2020)

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Introduction

01. With reference to the decision of FISH 10-2019 (Annex 2), the seventh Meeting of HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH-M 7-2020) was held on 10 March 2020 in the premises of Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (Gullbergs Strandgata 15, 411 04, Floor 2, Conference room Åskan) in Gothenburg, Sweden.

02. The Meeting was organized as a workshop on concretization of existing HELCOM actions on migratory fish for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and was held back-to-back with FISH 11-2020.

03. The Meeting was attended by delegations from Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, and Sweden, as well as an observer from WWF Sweden, and invited guests from the RETROUT project and the Baltic Salmon Fund. The list of participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

04. The Meeting was moderated by Markus Helavuori, HELCOM Professional Secretary, who also acted as secretary of the Meeting together with Henri Jokinen, HELCOM Project Manager.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

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

Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance of the group

2.1 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of FISH 10-2019 (document 2-1), and in particular noted that in discussing existing HELCOM actions (BSAP and Ministerial Declarations) to be considered for further development and uptake in the proposed Baltic Sea Action Plan, FISH 10-2019 had finalized and agreed on the rephrasing of several such actions, but that actions related to migratory fish were for the most part not resolved, and hence it was proposed that a FISH-M meeting would consider those.

2.2 The Meeting took note of the Notes from SOM-FISH WS 1-2019 (document 2-2). The Meeting considered in particular the follow up on the work of FISH 10-2019 regarding concretization of existing HELCOM actions. Regarding actions on migratory fish, the Meeting noted that SOM-FISH WS 1-2019 had concluded on a number of actions related to eel, which have been reported directly to FISH 11-2020, but had agreed that other actions related to migratory fish should be considered by a FISH-M meeting.

2.3 The Meeting discussed the SOM surveys and whether it is still possible to contribute, noting that e.g. experts from the RETROUT project have not been invited to contribute. The Meeting proposed that FISH-M should be invited to validate the results of the survey related to migratory fish.

2.4 The Meeting noted that the matters from the outcomes of FISH 10-2019 and SOM-FISH WS 1-2019 (document 2-1, 2-2) related to the work on rephrasing existing BSAP actions and follow-up of the HELCOM Ministerial Declaration, will be further considered under Agenda Item 3.

Agenda Item 3 Implementation and update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan

3.1 The Meeting took note of document 3-1 regarding the following up on existing HELCOM actions, as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that FISH 10-2019 and the SOM FISH WS 1-2019 have proposed that FISH-M should undertake inter alia the following tasks:

- develop common guidelines on breeding, rearing and releasing salmon and sea trout as reintroductions in potential salmonid rivers;
- consider further the national actions of developing long-term management plans for salmonids (salmon and sea trout), and the national action on developing restoration plans in suitable rivers to reinstate migratory fish species; and
- consider other actions related to salmon and sea trout.

3.2 The Meeting considered one by one those existing HELCOM actions related to migratory fish which had not yet been concluded by the Fish Group or SOM FISH WS 1-2019, as set out in the Annex of document 3-1. Following discussion, the Meeting agreed as specified in **Annex 2** of this Outcome for consideration by FISH 11-2020.

3.3 The Meeting discussed the proposal by SOM FISH WS 1-2019 to establish a HELCOM Eel Task Force to develop a HELCOM programme to ensure successful eel migrations from the Baltic Sea drainage basin to their spawning grounds. The Meeting agreed that international and regional measures in the CMS and under the EU Eel Regulation should be taken into account if such a programme is agreed to be developed.

3.4 The Meeting noted that human resources would be needed for the proposed task force, and also discussed whether development of such a programme would be the most efficient way for HELCOM to address the state of the eel in the Baltic Sea, rather than e.g. focusing on practical measures related to migration barriers. The Meeting also noted that a long-term programme combined with concrete measures on eel in the updated BSAP may be the most efficient way forward.

3.5 The Meeting noted that there is a need for coordinated management of eel within the Baltic Sea to improve the state of the eel and that such a proposed HELCOM programme could contribute to that. The Meeting, however, agreed that the proposed programme may need to be expanded to not only focus on migration to spawning grounds, but also to include downstream migration, harmonized or at least comparable data collection for a Baltic Sea wide assessment as well as management and control.

3.6 The Meeting discussed who would use data collected by the programme and how it would relate to data which is already being collected by Contracting Parties and provided to ICES. In this context, the Meeting noted that not all Contracting Parties are monitoring and providing comprehensive data to ICES, and that therefore we do not have a complete picture of the situation in the Baltic Sea, even though ICES is able to provide advice on the European level for eel based on recruitment series. The Meeting therefore agreed that guidance would be needed on what kind of data is needed from Contracting Parties, noting that it cannot be identical for all countries due to the different situation and fisheries in different countries, taking also into consideration what kind of data would be comparable and useful for ICES. The Meeting noted that a project on this matter would be useful, e.g. in line with a past BONUS project proposal that was not financed.

3.7 The Meeting also discussed whether a Baltic Sea level focus is sufficient for a species like eel, and noted that it would be important to link the work to the evaluation of the EU Eel Regulation.

3.8 The Meeting invited FISH 11-2020 to consider the above discussion when considering the outcome of SOM FISH WS 1-2019.

3.9 The Meeting took note of the Review of synopses on potential new actions for the updated BSAP (document 3-2, 3-2 Add.1) and considered in particular those synopses that are related to migratory fish.

3.10 The Meeting also considered possible gaps among the proposed actions and noted that there are no proposals focusing on consideration of environmental permits for activities that may have an impact on the river habitats of migratory fish species. The Meeting noted that HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1 covers habitat restoration to some extent but not with regard to environmental permits.

3.11 Noting that HELCOM Working Groups may still propose new actions for the updated BSAP, the Meeting agreed to invite FISH 11-2020 to propose a new action as follows:

- *National environmental permitting authorities to take into account possible impacts on weak migratory fish stocks, particularly salmon, as recognized by ICES or nationally, and how this may compromise the ability to reach agreed river specific fish population targets.*

3.12 In considering the proposed actions on removal of migration barriers, the Meeting discussed the benefits of having time limited permits for dams, which facilitates removal procedures. The Meeting noted information by Sweden that according to new legislation hydropower plants have a maximum permit validity period of 40 years, but also noted that permits for smaller barriers remain without any time limits.

3.13 The Meeting took note of the [Baltic Shadow Plan](#) published by CCB and WWF during the high-level segment of HELCOM 41-2020, including also proposed actions related to eel and other migratory fish.

Agenda Item 4 Future work

4.1 The Meeting discussed the possible needs for future meetings or workshops of FISH-M. The Meeting also considered the need to update the work plan and elect a Chair to FISH-M, recalling that no developments in this regard have been made since FISH 5-2016. The Meeting agreed that FISH-M should remain an ad hoc task force that meets only when requested by the Fish Group to undertake a specific task. As such, the Meeting did not see the need to develop a work plan or elect a Chair at present, noting that work plans should be developed by the Fish Group, when needed.

Agenda Item 5 Any other business

5.1 The Meeting noted that the contact list of FISH-M has not been kept up to date in recent years. The Meeting agreed that an updated list would be useful and invited the contact points of the Fish Group (Contracting Parties and Observers) to inform the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) of contacts to be included in such a list at their earliest convenience, and to keep the list up to date on an annual basis.

5.2 The Meeting noted that the RETROUT Project will organize its end conference in Tallinn, Estonia on 22-23 September 2020.

Agenda Item 6 Outcome of the Meeting

6.1 The Meeting adopted the Outcome of the Meeting. The Outcome of the Meeting, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available on the FISH-M 7-2020 meeting site.

Annex 1. List of participants

Representing	Name	Organization	E-mail
Contracting Parties			
Estonia	Martin Kesler	University of Tartu, Estonian Marine Institute	martin.kesler@ut.ee
Finland	Heikki Lehtinen	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	heikki.lehtinen@mmm.fi
Lithuania	Antanas Kontautas	Klaipeda University	antanas.kontautas@ku.lt
Sweden	Ulrika Gunnartz	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	ulrika.gunnartz@havochvatten.se
Sweden	Sofia Brockmark	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	sofia.brockmark@havochvatten.se
Sweden	Håkan Carlstrand	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	hakan.carlstrand@havochvatten.se
Sweden	Erik Årnfelt	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	erik.arnfelt@havochvatten.se
Sweden	Håkan Wickström	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	hakan.wickstrom@slu.se
Observer organizations			
Observer	Inger Näslund	WWF	inger.naslund@wwf.se
Invited Guests			
Guest	Håkan Häggström	RETROUT Project	hakan.haggstrom@lansstyrelsen.se
Guest	Thomas Johansson	Baltic Salmon Fund	thomas@balticsalmonfund.com
HELCOM Secretariat			
Secretariat	Markus Helavuori	Secretariat	markus.helavuori@helcom.fi
Secretariat	Henri Jokinen	Secretariat	henri.jokinen@helcom.fi

Annex 2. Rephrasing of actions in the Baltic Sea Action Plan

The table below contains the outcome of discussions on those existing HELCOM actions related to migratory fish, which have not yet been concluded. It may be noted, that a number of actions related to eel were concluded by SOM-FISH WS 1-2019 and have been reported directly to FISH 11-2020.

Action (origin)	Outcome of FISH 10-2019	Outcome of SOM-FISH WS 1	Comments by FISH-M 7-2020	Proposed formulation for the updated BSAP
Further development and implementation of common practices for breeding, rearing and releasing salmon and sea trout as reintroductions in potential salmonid rivers (MD 2013) Not accomplished (Joint action)	The Meeting agreed that although it is ambitious, the aim should be to develop common guidelines by 2021. For this purpose, a FISH-M workshop should be organized in early 2020, possibly back to back with the next meeting of the Fish Group. Furthermore, the Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to take the lead in this work.	The proposal for FISH-M to develop common guidelines was supported.	The Meeting <u>took note</u> of a presentation by Sweden on national procedures and the ongoing update of the national legislation and strategy concerning e.g. release of fish (not only salmonids) (Presentation 1). The Meeting <u>discussed</u> principles on breeding, rearing and releasing fish in general, and concluded that it would be possible to develop common guidelines on the matter. The Meeting <u>agreed</u> on the importance on developing common guidelines on the matter and <u>welcomed</u> the offer by Sweden to develop a first draft for common guidelines based on the Swedish national strategy, NAFCO guidelines etc. in autumn 2020. The Meeting <u>proposed</u> that the guidelines should be annexed to Recommendation 32/33-1, which already contains related provisions in its paragraph 7. The Meeting further <u>proposed</u> that the guidelines should include general principles on breeding, rearing and releasing salmonids, making reference also to relevant EU and other legislation. The Meeting <u>invited</u> FISH 11-2020 to agree on this way forward, and <u>invited</u> interested parties to liaise with Sweden (sofia.brockmark@havochvatten.se and fredrik.arrhenius@havochvatten.se) in order to contribute to the work.	This action does not need to be included in the updated BSAP, provided that common guidelines are finalized in time.
Competent authorities to take immediate action for development of long-		The Workshop <u>noted</u> that upstream mitigation measures, rearing and releasing methodologies etc. are not part	The Meeting <u>noted</u> that ICES is currently preparing long term salmon management plans.	<i>Competent authorities to establish and implement long-term national management plans for salmon stocks by 2025</i>

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<p>term management plans for commercially exploited fish stocks so that they are within safe biological limits and reach agreed targets, such as maximum sustainable yield, improve their distribution and size/age range (salmon) (National action, implemented by 2/9)</p>		<p>of the existing salmon management plans. The Workshop <u>recognized</u> the importance of addressing these matters within the BSAP, but <u>noted</u> that due to lack of specific expertise present, the Workshop was not in a position to discuss the matter in any detail. The Workshop further <u>agreed</u> to recommend that the next FISH-M Workshop (agreed by FISH 10-2019 to take place in 2020) should consider the matter further.</p>	<p>The Meeting <u>noted</u> that set targets in the proposed revised action refer to national as well as regionally agreed targets, e.g. as specified in Recommendation 32-33/1 and relevant EU legislation.</p>	<p><i>so that they reach set targets, including but not limited to smolt production, genetic diversity and distribution throughout the river habitat.</i></p>
<p>Competent authorities to take immediate action for development of long-term management plans for commercially exploited fish species (sea trout) so that they are within safe biological limits Partly accomplished (National action, implemented by 2/9)</p>		<p>The Workshop <u>noted</u> that upstream mitigation measures, rearing and releasing methodologies etc. are not part of the existing sea trout management plans. The Workshop <u>recognized</u> the importance of addressing these matters within the BSAP, but noted that due to lack of specific expertise present, the Workshop was not in a position to discuss the matter in any detail. The Workshop invited the RETROUT Project to consider this action and provide proposals to FISH 11-2020. The Workshop further <u>agreed</u> to recommend that the next FISH-M Workshop (agreed by FISH 10-2019 to take place in 2020)</p>	<p>The Meeting <u>noted</u> that set targets in the proposed revised action refer to national as well as regionally agreed targets, e.g. as specified in Recommendation 32-33/1 and relevant EU legislation.</p>	<p><i>Competent authorities to improve data related to sea trout stocks with the view to establish and implement long-term national management plans for sea trout stocks by 2025 so that they reach set targets, including but not limited to recruitment status, genetic diversity and distribution throughout the river habitat.</i></p>

		<p>should consider the matter further.</p> <p>The workshop <u>noted</u> a clarification by Poland that it is in fact national river restoration activities that are ongoing, and not the development of management plans, as discussed by FISH 9-2019.</p>		
<p>Develop restoration plans (including restoration of spawning sites and migration routes) in suitable rivers to reinstate migratory fish species</p> <p>Partly accomplished (National action, implemented by 7/9)</p>		<p>The Workshop <u>agreed</u> that it would be useful if the RETROUT Project and the next FISH-M workshop (agreed by FISH 10-2019) should consider this action in more detail.</p>	<p>The Meeting <u>noted</u> that the action relates to HELCOM Recommendations 19/2 and 32-33/1</p> <p>The Meeting <u>noted</u> that the action should address strengthening of native strains as well as reintroductions in potential habitat rivers for migratory fish species.</p> <p>The Meeting <u>discussed</u> the original term “suitable rivers” as it was considered unclear, and agreed that rivers with degraded habitats of connectivity could be a more suitable formulation. Following discussion, the Meeting <u>agreed</u> that relevant rivers would be more appropriate, leaving it up to the Contracting Parties to determine which rivers are in need of restoration plans. The Meeting further <u>agreed</u> on the importance of Contracting Parties providing information on which the relevant rivers are, when reporting on implementation of the action in the future. The Meeting further <u>noted</u> that priority rivers have already been agreed as part of Recommendation 32-33/1, but that such priority lists are not available for other migratory fish species.</p>	<p><i>Develop and implement habitat restoration plans (including spawning sites and migration routes) in relevant rivers by 2025 to strengthen native strains and to reinstate migratory fish species</i></p>