



Document title	Proposed update of HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1 to include restoration guidelines
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Agenda Item	3 – Implementation and update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan
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Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	FISH 10-2019 Outcome, Annex 2, Table 1.

Background

In the working process of updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), existing HELCOM actions have been considered for further development and concretization, and for evaluating the possibilities of these actions to be implemented by 2021, with the ultimate aim of determining whether these actions in some form should be included in the updated BSAP.

Regarding the action “*Further development and implementation of recommendations for riverine and estuarine management and conservation measures, such as fish ways for up and down migration, restoration and protection of spawning grounds, concerning fisheries within rivers and estuaries*” FISH 9-2019 ([Outcome](#), Annex 2 Table 1) agreed to change the status of it from not accomplished to partly accomplished, as relevant progress concerning river restorations has been made by [FISH-M 4-2017](#) and with the ongoing developments of the RETROUT project (document 7-1). FISH 9-2019 further proposed to update HELCOM [Recommendation 32-33/1](#) by adding guidelines on restoration measures, taking into account conclusions from FISH-M 4-2017 and the RETROUT project, with the view to consider the action accomplished when such guidelines are in place. The Secretariat was tasked to draft a first proposal for the updated Recommendation 32-33/1.

FISH 10-2019 ([Outcome](#), Annex 2 Table 1) considered the matter further, noted that no progress had yet been made and invited the Secretariat to draft a revision of Recommendation 32-33/1 to FISH 11-2020, with a view to approval at HOD 58-2020.

As proposed by FISH 9-2019 and FISH 10-2019, the revision of Recommendation 32-33/1 should be based on the conclusions from the FISH-M 4-2017 Meeting and the RETROUT project. The relevant output from the RETROUT project for this matter will be a ‘Baltic Sea river restoration best practices guidelines’ report, with the objective to provide best available practices and recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration for enhancing ecological quality and increasing sea trout productivity. According to the RETROUT project plan and the current outlook of the work, this report will not be finished until the end of the project in September 2020. The work plan for the RETROUT river restoration best practices guidelines report, as agreed by the RETROUT WP 4 working group, is provided as an Annex to this document.

With this background, drafting a revision of Recommendation 32-33/1 may at this stage be considered premature. Instead, it is proposed that the drafting can be done when the final results from the RETROUT project, including the ‘Baltic Sea river restoration best practices guidelines’ report, are available. As the RETROUT project and the ‘Baltic Sea river restoration best practices guidelines’ report will be finalized by the end of September 2020, enough time would still remain for the revision of Recommendation 32-33/1 for the action to be considered accomplished by 2021. This would mean that the action would not need to be carried forward to the updated BSAP. With this view, a first draft of a revised Recommendation 32-33/1 would be developed by the Secretariat to be considered by FISH-M and the Fish Group, as appropriate. As agreed by FISH 10-2019, Estonia is also invited to contribute to the work due to recent experience from several dam removal projects.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to agree with the proposed way forward in updating HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1 to include guidelines on restoration measures.

Annex. 4.4 RETROUT Guidelines for river restoration best practices – provisional work plan

[Accepted by RETROUT WP 4 working group on 11 February 2020]

1. Background

Excerpt from RETROUT Application v. 11

The project intends to advance implementation of restoration measures (mainly habitat restoration and addressing migration barriers) in selected rivers, mainly in accordance with priority rivers identified by HELCOM as having the greatest potential to increase the production of trout and salmon (listed in HELCOM BSEP 126A and Recommendation 32-33/1), with the purpose of demonstrating innovative implementation tools. In this context, stakeholder communication is an important tool in need of innovative approaches.

The **gained experience** will be synthesised **in a dedicated Baltic Toolbox** with a set of river restoration measures to be published as a HELCOM report with pan-Baltic recommendations, including a section with case studies.

HELCOM will coordinate and be responsible for **quality control** of the Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration in close cooperation with the WP partners. HELCOM will **publish a report of the Toolbox**, including recommendations for protection and management of sea trout rivers and stocks.

WP 4 Group of activities 4.4

Title: Develop Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration

Description of the group of activities:

The key task of this activity is to jointly develop a Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration to be used by local, regional, national public authorities. The Toolbox will also serve the macro-regional level by providing input for policy recommendations at HELCOM and EU levels.

The Toolbox will **consist of** summary inputs from WP activities 4.2 (joint evaluation of completed restoration projects) and 4.3 (demonstrating efficient river restoration measures). **The main objective** of the Toolbox is **to provide a list of best available practices and recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration** for enhancing ecological quality and increasing sea trout productivity.

The main **output** will be a **Baltic Toolbox** for River Restoration to be published as a **HELCOM report in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings series**.

HELCOM will coordinate and be responsible for quality control of the Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration in close cooperation with the other WP partners. The Toolbox will be **reviewed by the experts in the HELCOM FISH group**, representing all Baltic Sea coastal countries. **The results** of the report will serve as a **basis for the development of a HELCOM Recommendation** on cost efficient measures for improving water quality and fish stocks in identified priority rivers.

HELCOM will disseminate the Toolbox via HELCOM FISH group contacts to all Baltic Sea coastal countries and other international fora, including EU. A concise summary of the Toolbox will be translated into local languages by project partners in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

In addition, the lessons, and best practices will be transferred to decision-makers via study visits, dissemination of the Toolbox, as well as national and pan-Baltic events. The study visits to demonstration sites for peer-learning within and outside of the partnership, will be organized back-to-back with national conclusion meetings/WP reference group meetings (one per country) so that national stakeholders in each country can participate in the visits.

At the end of the project one pan-Baltic conclusion meeting River restoration and trout management.

Transnational relevance: For the Baltic Sea countries, with their joint commitments, shared resource (the Baltic Sea) and similar geo-climate, it is conducive to jointly **compile and disseminate identified methods and technological solutions for river restoration that are most cost-efficient from the perspective of fish stocks production.**

The **output will** contribute to national work to support EU in developing a sea trout management plan and **serve regional efforts to consider HELCOM recommendations for improving the status of migratory fish.**

The specific transnational added values are the possibilities for improved habitat quality and increased sea trout population in the Baltic Sea region which in turn offer better opportunities to strengthen the fishing and tourism industries.

Excerpt from RETROUT Work Plan v. 2

WP 4 Group of activities 4.4 - Develop Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration

Activity leader

PP 13 - Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, HELCOM

Description of the group of activities

The main task of this activity is to summarise all the lessons learned within WP 4 in a **Baltic Sea region best practices manual for river restoration** (Baltic Toolbox) to be used by local, regional, national public authorities. The publication will i.a. include recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration, best practices, trout river monitoring methods and plan)

At the end of the project one pan-Baltic conclusion meeting River restoration and trout management will be arranged.

Task 4.4.1 **Baltic Sea region best practices manual for river restoration**

(First draft/lead HELCOM, contribution all WP 4)

To be completed by end of Period 6

The main report/publication of the WP 4 **summarising best practices and providing recommendations will be based on first drafts by HELCOM and incorporate commenting by the WP4 WG and other project partners and relevant HELCOM groups.** The publication will i.a. include recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration, best practices, trout river monitoring methods and plan)

Output: The main output will be a Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration to be published as a HELCOM report in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings series.

2. Link to HELCOM interests and work

HELCOM FISH 9-2019 meeting Outcome:

Outcome Annex 2. Table 1.

Action (origin)

Further **development** and implementation **of recommendations for riverine and estuarine management and conservation measures, such as fish ways for up and down migration, restoration and protection of spawning grounds**, concerning fisheries within rivers and estuaries (MD 2013)

Current status: Not accomplished

Reflections and proposed process

The RETROUT project will collate information on the effect of restoration measures for seatrout in the Baltic Sea region including, e.g. for spawning sites, fish ways. The Meeting further noted that FISH-M 4-2017 addressed a number of cases and best practices for river restoration.

The Meeting:

- agreed to change the status of accomplishment to partly accomplished
- **proposed to update HELCOM Recommendation 32/33-1 [sic.] by adding guidelines on restoration measures, taking into account conclusions from FISH-M 4-2017 and the RETROUT project.** The Secretariat will draft a first proposal. When such guidelines are in place the action can be considered as accomplished.
- noted that the action is originally related to salmon

HELCOM FISH 10-2019 meeting Outcome:

Outcome Annex 2. Table 1.

Action (origin)

Further **development** and implementation **of recommendations for riverine and estuarine management and conservation measures, such as fish ways for up and down migration, restoration and protection of spawning grounds**, concerning fisheries within rivers and estuaries (MD 2013)

Current status: Partly accomplished

Outcome of FISH 10-2019

The Meeting noted that the Secretariat has unfortunately not managed to draft a revision of the Recommendation.

The Meeting agreed to invite the Secretariat to do so by adding **guidelines on restoration measures to a draft revised Recommendation 32/33-1** [sic.], taking into account the outcome of FISH-M 4-2017 and **developments within the RETROUT Project**. The Meeting also agreed that the draft revised Recommendation should be considered by FISH 11, with a view to approval at HOD 58-2020. The Meeting furthermore agreed that Estonia should be invited to contribute to the work as they have recent experience from several dam removal projects.

3. Rationale, provisional structure and outline of the Guidelines report (task 4.4.1)

The below structuring of the work on the 'Toolbox' is based on the descriptions in the Project Application and Work Plan as well as on the discussions on the matter held during the WP 4 sessions of the RETROUT mid-term meeting in Gdansk, in May 2019 and the RETROUT Yearly Partnership Meeting in Stockholm, in October 2019.

What should be achieved?

- The key task of GoA 4.4 is to jointly develop Baltic Sea 'Toolbox' for river restoration.
- The main objective is to provide a list of best available practices and recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration for enhancing ecological quality and increasing sea trout productivity.
- It has been considered whether the term 'Toolbox' as used in the project Work Plan is the most suitable for describing what will be produced, since any specific 'tools' will not be developed, instead the focus will be on providing guidelines for the restoration process.
- Hence, possibly better suited alternatives such as 'Manual', 'Guidelines', 'Best practices' have been suggested. [However, 'Toolbox' is still used here to refer to the output of GoA 4.4]

What will it contribute with beyond what already exist?

- It should be acknowledged that a number of river restoration manuals already exist, and that it is important to be clear on what this project outcome will produce and how it will complement to what already exists in this field.
- Most existing river restoration manuals give detailed practical advice on how to do the restoration work itself, whereas the RETROUT report strives to describe the best practises for the whole process of conducting successful restoration projects, from initial evaluation of the problem and need for a restoration, to planning, practical implementation, and impact evaluation.

Who will it serve?

- The 'Toolbox' for river restoration is to be used by local, regional, national public authorities.
- The 'Toolbox' will also serve the macro-regional level by providing input for policy recommendations at HELCOM and EU levels.

What should it contain?

- The ‘Toolbox’ will consist of summary inputs from GoAs 4.2 (Joint evaluation of completed restoration projects) and 4.3 (Demonstrating efficient river restoration measures).
- Based on the experiences from the restoration cases and the results from the evaluation past restoration projects for factors of success and failure, a list of a best available practices and recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration will developed.
- It has also been brought up that additional national evaluations or information on best practices or successful restoration factors could be used to contribute to the Toolbox [discussed during the mid-term meeting and YPM-19] → in such a case, how could this be done?
- It has been concluded that all information is valuable but that it needs to be considered how the inclusion of potential additional information can be justified from the view point of having a coherent approach to be presented.
- It has been suggested that a section about the juridical procedure in general and with main characteristics and differences between countries could be included in the Guidelines report [discussed during RETROUT Yearly Partnership Meeting 2019, in Stockholm]
- The ‘Toolbox’ will finally be published as a HELCOM report.
 - before publication by HELCOM the report must be circulated to members of the FISH Group for comments
 - this is also acknowledged in the RETROUT Application: *“HELCOM will coordinate and be responsible for quality control of the Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration in close cooperation with the other WP partners. The Toolbox will be reviewed by the experts in the HELCOM FISH group, representing all Baltic Sea coastal countries.”*
 - the HELCOM FISH Group convenes twice a year, once in winter once in summer, but the exact meeting dates are not yet known, however the report can perhaps be circulated intersessionally, if needed
 - due to several uncertainties in delivery times etc., it has suggested that a realistic approach would be to strive for a finalized Toolbox first as a RETROUT project report version by the end of period 6, where after the HELCOM review and publication process could take place as an own procedure.

How will it be done/what is the approach?

- Based on the Work Plan and led by Nandita Singh (PP 16), a 4.2 report on river restoration success factors, presenting results of the analyses of the studied past river restoration cases, will be produced.
- This report together with general experiences and knowledge gathered during the work of 4.2 will feed into the ‘Toolbox’ report.
- After finalising their river restoration demonstration cases (or latest by end of period 5, as agreed), responsible PPs will prepare a case study report that covers the whole process of carrying out the river restoration (to the applicable and relevant parts regarding what is done in the project), following the agreed instructions/guidelines for writing the case study reports.
- The 4.3 case study reports will feed into the ‘Toolbox’ report.
- A workshop to synthesise the materials and to identify best practices and develop recommendations for Baltic Sea river restorations, will tentatively be organize during the first half of 2020. Exact time, place and working mode still needs to be planned and decided.

Provisional report outline

(with enlisted elements in the RETROUT Work Plan applied)

Executive summary

1. Introduction

- general intro to river restorations and the need for improvement of riverine spawning and juvenile habitats (including migration possibilities) for sea trout in the Baltic Sea area
- rationale within RETROUT and beneficial links to policies and practices
- purpose and aim of the report

2. Background

- what is river restoration?
- why is it needed?
- central concepts and definitions
- a brief view on existing literature (what types of guidelines already exist?)
- legal aspects
 - juridical procedure in general
 - main characteristics and differences between countries

3. Purpose, methods and approaches used

- briefly presenting the elements of the 'Toolbox' – Output from GoAs 4.2 & 4.3 – and the main qualities of them
- briefly presenting the inclusion of additional national successful restoration cases as examples

4. Summary results from GoA 4.2

- results
- interpretation
- usefulness & limitations

5. Summary results from GoA 4.3

- case-wise summaries
- interpretation
- usefulness & limitations
- general experiences and lessons learned from the demonstration cases
- (the full demonstration case reports could be annexed to the 'Toolbox' report)

6. Synthesis

- synthesis of the results obtained and experiences gained
- develop a list of best available practices and recommendations for cost-efficient and effective river restoration

7. Conclusions

Who will contribute in drafting?

- Lead drafting responsibility at HELCOM
 - first drafts by HELCOM
 - then incorporate commenting by the WP4 WG
- Contribution by all concerned project partners throughout the process
 - requires active participation in terms of providing substantial and constructive feed-back when requested, also pro-active participation is welcomed
- Contribution/review by HELCOM working groups, e.g. task force on migratory fish (Fish-M) (review round or circulation before acceptance? details to be sorted out)

- Different HELCOM working structures (Fish-M, Fish Group, HOD) to be kept informed (potentially need for a final approval and publication permit)

What would be a realistic schedule?

TENTATIVE

- Preliminary drafting in winter/spring 2020
- Final input from GoA 4.2 by end March 2020 (4.2 report ready)
- Input from GoA 4.3 by end of period 5, i.e. end March 2020 (first complete case study reports ready regardless of the current situation of the demonstration cases at that time; this has been agreed upon earlier)
- Developing of the list of river restoration best practices and recommendations (based on 4.2 and 4.3 outputs as well as the expert knowledge within the project) during first half of 2020, finalizing during joint workshop for this purpose (time and place TBD)
- First full draft by HELCOM ready and circulated to WG by end of April 2020
- Input from PPs by May/June 2020
- Final version ready by August 2020

HELCOM review and publication process could take place as an own procedure after this