



Document title	HELCOM indicator work towards HOLAS 3
Code	10-2
Category	INF
Agenda Item	10 – Work on HELCOM indicator development
Submission date	16.2.2022
Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

This document aims to provide a brief summary of HELCOM indicator work towards HOLAS 3, specifically addressing those indicators with relevance to fish-related evaluations. Information is provided under key sections below.

[Culmination of the process to develop HELCOM indicators towards HOLAS 3](#)

The Future work on HELCOM indicators process, part of the HOLAS 3 development phase, concluded the main focus of its work through reporting of indicator development to HOD 61-2021 for approval on what indicators to use as part of the HOLAS 3 assessment. In addition to the further development of the actual indicators prior developments have also included the development of a [HELCOM indicator manual](#), published in 2021, which provides an overview of the structure, purpose and development process for HELCOM indicators.

At HOD 61-2021 an overview of HELCOM indicators towards HOLAS 3 was presented. HOD 61-2021 [Document 5-2 Rev.1](#) covers a general overview of all indicators towards HOLAS 3 and a selection of issues where additional updates were added, or responses made to issues raised at State and Conservation 15-2021. [Document 5-1 Rev.1](#) (and the associated workspace used for approval, see link in document) specifically addressed those indicators where threshold values/threshold value methodologies were presented for approval. More specifically, document 5-2 Rev.1 covered the following fish-related indicators: *Abundance of salmon spawners and smolt* and *Abundance of sea trout spawners and parr*, as there were no proposed changes for these compared to the approach applied in HOLAS 2 (HOD 61-2021 [Outcome paragraph 5.12](#)). Document 5-1 Rev.1 (and associated workspace documents) addressed the following indicators - a brief summary of the outcomes and ongoing work is also provided:

- Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups*

Change from HOLAS 2 represented by the application of an improved methodology, ASCETS, as described in the respective document (on workspace via 5-1 Rev.1). General approval for this development ([Outcome paragraph 5.15](#)).

- Abundance of key coastal fish species*

Change from HOLAS 2 represented by the application of an improved methodology, ASCETS, as described in the respective document (on workspace via 5-1 Rev.1). General approval for this development ([Outcome paragraph 5.15](#)).

- Size structure of coastal fish (L90)*

*Work on these topics is being carried out by/with indicator leads and the [HELCOM BLUES project](#), an EU co-financed project.

Development welcomed and proposal made that if threshold values can be developed/agreed by HOLAS 3 that presentation of trends would be valuable ([Outcome paragraph 5.19](#)). Current developments under the HELCOM BLUES project expected to be presented to FISH-PRO III 4-2022 meeting and subsequently STATE & CONSERVATION 16-2022.

- Abundance of non-commercial offshore species (three-spined stickleback, flounder, brill and dab)*

Development related to this proposed indicator was initiated in the HELCOM BLUES project prior to the work (presented below) related to commercial fish and lists of relevant species. The issue of potential overlap with species subsequently considered as commercial fish species was identified and it was proposed that clarification and further development should be presented to State and Conservation 16-2021 ([Outcome paragraph 5.25](#)). Work under the HELCOM BLUES project is ongoing and will be presented at the ComFish WS 2-2022 and State and Conservation 16-2022. The aim of the ongoing work is to explore fish stocks that lack analytical reference points from ICES.

- Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear*

Although bycatch of fish is not currently addressed within this indicator (though it may be a relevant future issue since it is addressed for example under MSFD D1C1) the indicator does have a clear relation with fisheries activities. The work towards HOLAS 3 is presented in documentation associated with document 5-1 Rev.1 and in simple terms presents progress towards threshold value setting (and associated assessments) and risk mapping. A number of issues are identified, in particular the lack of official bycatch data (e.g. bycatch rates) and information on smaller vessels and further work is underway for example to consider the appropriate use of Limit Reference Values or population level models in threshold value application ([Outcome paragraph 5.24](#)). These issues will be presented at a regional HELCOM Workshop, jointly developed by the HELCOM BLUES project, with the aim of agreeing on the finer details and approach that is viable for HOLAS 3. The Workshop will take place on 24 March 2022 and will provide input to STATE & CONSERVATION 16-2021.

Commercial fish indicator/assessment (e.g., linked to MSFD D3) work is addressed in its own section below.

It is also noted that general study reservations were applied to indicators in HOLAS 3 at HOD 61-2021 by Denmark and Russia to allow national processes to conclude ([Outcome paragraph 5.10](#)). Final clarification on any open issues is currently being addressed.

Assessment of status of fish in HOLAS 3

Assessment of coastal fish

Of additional relevance to the HOLAS 3 work is the series of Workshops to finalise the application of the HELCOM Integrated Assessment of Biodiversity (BEAT) for HOLAS 3. One segment of the BEAT Workshop, supported by the Baltic Data Flows and HELCOM BLUES projects, will focus on additional inclusion of new developed fish indicators (as outlined above) into the assessment, with first proposals discussed during [BEAT WS 1-2021](#) and final decisions expected on integration aspects for the upcoming BEAT workshop this spring ([Targeted Assessment Methodology Workshop for HOLAS 3 – BLUES – Baltic Data Flows: BEAT 2-2022](#)).

Overview of progress made related to Commercial Fish status assessment

A regional HELCOM workshop was held to further develop the status assessment of commercial fish for HOLAS 3, including the appropriate alignment with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) – [ComFish WS 1-2021](#). The workshop focussed on the following main issues: an approach to derive a list of commercial fish, a regional list of commercial fish species, the approach for evaluation of fishing mortality, the approach for evaluation spawning stock biomass, viable options to evaluate condition related components (e.g. age, size, etc), the data availability for these assessments, and the appropriate integration

of component parts of the assessment. The outcomes of the workshop (e.g. documents [3J-33](#), [3J-95](#) and [3J-102](#)) and a series questions and proposals was provided to STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021.

Due to the tight timelines between the workshop and STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 an intersessional meeting was established to specifically address the commercial fish discussion, though the proposal to establish a second commercial fish workshop in spring 2022 was endorsed ([Outcome paragraph 3J-134](#)). STATE & CONSERVATION 15A-2021 endorsed the approach for developing the regional species list and the proposed species list ([Outcome paragraph 1.8](#)), and supported the establishment of a second workshop on this topic, with the inclusion of some proposed additional issues for consideration ([Outcome paragraph 1.12 and 1.13](#)). The overall proposal was also presented at HOD 61-2021 ([document 5-6 Rev.2](#)).

The Second commercial fish status assessment preparation workshop towards HOLAS 3 will take place on 1-2 March 2022 ([ComFish WS 2-2022](#)). A provisional agenda is available in the meeting site and preparatory work is underway.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information provided.