



Document title	Extracts of outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings of relevance for Fish
Code	2-6
Category	INF
Agenda Item	2 – Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance of the group
Submission date	27.4.2018
Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

The following HELCOM meetings that are relevant for the Fish Group have taken place since the seventh meeting of the Group (FISH 7-2017), which was held on 14-15 November 2017:

1. [HOD 53-2018](#), Helsinki, Finland, 12-13 December 2017
2. [FISH-PRO II 5-2018](#), Gothenburg, Sweden, 14-16 February 2018
3. [Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas \(EBSAs\)](#) in the Baltic Sea, Helsinki, Finland, 20-24 February 2018
4. PRESSURE 8-2018, Berlin, Germany, 18-20 April 2018

As a separate topic, this document also includes information on recent HELCOM discussions on arranging a joint HELCOM-OSPAR workshop on the indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds' ([see heading 5](#)).

The outcome of HELCOM 2018 Ministerial Meeting is available as meeting document 2-1, the outcome of CG FISHDATA 1-2018 as meeting document 5-1, and the outcome of the regional workshop on eel and the Baltic Sea as meeting document 2-4.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider the attached extracts from the outcomes of relevant HELCOM meetings for the Fish Group.

Extracts of outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings of relevance for Fish

1. HOD 53-2017, Helsinki, Finland, HOD 53-2018, Helsinki, Finland, 12-13 December 2017

The Meeting took note of matters raised within recent meetings of the subsidiary bodies (documents 3-14 and 3-15) as introduced by the Executive Secretary:

- Cooperation with BALTFISH has progressed with exchange of letters between HELCOM and BALTFISH Chairs and that a symmetrical agreement on exchange of information in the form of key documents has been reached, that the Secretariat has been requested by FISH to share information on a regular basis with BALTFISH Chair and that the FISH group agreed that the Chair of HELCOM FISH should attend the BALTFISH Forum on behalf of HELCOM.
- that the second Meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue between secretariats and representatives of regional fisheries management bodies and regional seas organisations (including HELCOM for the Baltic Sea) will take place 10-13 April 2018 in Seoul, Republic of Korea and that the event would be a good opportunity to present and develop the ongoing work on closer cooperation between HELCOM, BALTFISH and other fisheries related bodies in the Baltic Sea.

The Meeting considered the substantial proposals emerging from recent meetings of the subsidiary bodies (c.f. requests for agreement or approval listed in documents 3-14 and 3-15) and:

- approved the updated ToRs of CG Aquaculture as included in Annex 3.

Fish group

The Meeting

- recalled the initiative to develop an inventory of data needs, and steps to fill the identified data gaps, of HELCOM indicators ‘Number of drowned mammals and water birds in fishing gear’ and ‘Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes’ (cf. document 5-3 of the HELCOM FISH 7-2017) and took note of the current status of work based on information presented by the lead country Poland.
- recalled that the issue has engaged both State and Conservation group as the main responsible for core indicators, as well as Fish group, tasked with the operationalization of fisheries related indicators.
- noted the work planned for the Correspondence Group to develop a HELCOM road map on fisheries data for operationalizing the two indicators established by the FISH 7-2017 (Annex 1 of document 3-14, and c.f. FISH 7-2017 Outcome, paragraphs 5.14-5.18), including a workshop planned for January-February 2018 in Denmark.
- supported the lead country (Poland) approach to give priority to finalizing HELCOM inventory on data needs and thus provide guidance in developing the roadmap as indicated in the ToR of the Correspondence Group.
- expressed the wish to follow this process closely, thanked Poland for the work so far and invited Poland to report to HOD 54-2018 on finalization of the inventory of data needs.
- requested Denmark to inform of the dates of the HELCOM FISH CG workshop and prepare an invitation letter as soon as convenient and requested that, based on the invitation by Denmark, the Secretariat prepares and circulates the invitation and Provisional Agenda.
- took note of the outcome of the Regional Workshop on Eel and the Baltic Sea (FISH-M 5-2017) organized by HELCOM in cooperation with the Convention on Migratory Species and Sargasso Sea Commission (document 3-17) and thanked Sweden for hosting and preparing this timely and successful workshop.
- noted that the workshop called for urgent implementation of HELCOM commitments on eel from Ministerial Meetings in 2007 and 2013, that it was of the opinion that these commitments should be taken on board, and if necessary further strengthened, during the foreseen update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

- noted that action needs to be taken on eel and expressed support that the HELCOM Secretariat follows up the initiative discussed in the workshop to prepare a regional project on eel with links to the implementation, and foreseen update of, the Baltic Sea Action Plan (c.f. document 3-17).
- took note of the planned second range state workshop by the Convention on Migratory Species and Sargasso Sea Commission on 15-16 May 2018 to be hosted by the World Maritime University in Malmö and encouraged participation by the Baltic Sea states as well as by HELCOM.
- took note of the comment by CCB that the time for research has passed and there is an urgent need to take concrete and efficient management measures in the Baltic Sea coastal countries and EU to ensure the survival of the European eel. Stock of European eel has declined dramatically since the early 1970s and the species is currently classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN and HELCOM Red Lists, listed in Appendix II of the CMS and Appendix II of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CCB has launched a dedicated web page on European eel (<http://www.ccb.se/eel/>).

State and Conservation

The Meeting approved the proposal for continuation of FISH-PRO II project (document 3-6).

2. FISH-PRO II 5-2018, Gothenburg, Sweden, 14-16 February 2018

Thematic assessment and core indicators

The Meeting

- considered the draft third thematic assessment of coastal fish status (document 3-3-Rev.1, Presentation 1) that contributes to the HOLAS II report to be published in July 2018, and provided specific comments on the contents, as included in document 3-4.
- took note of the latest versions of the core indicator reports on Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups (document 3-1) and on Abundance of key coastal fish species (document 3-2), noting that these will be the basis of the input for HOLAS II and the thematic assessment on coastal fish, and that they are to be finalized by 6 April 2018.

Size related indicators

The Meeting

- took note of recent work regarding size related indicators, presented by Örjan Östman, Sweden (Presentation 2). When using size related indicators there is a potential for not needing long time series in order to assess the ecological status of the fish communities and size is also easy to measure for all fish species.
Since 2017, size related coastal fish data on cod, flounder, perch, pikeperch and whitefish has been collected from Poland, Estonia, Finland and Sweden from years 2001-2016 and primary analyses have been carried out by Örjan Östman on a suite of size related indicators (L90, LFI and mean length).
- welcomed data submission on size related data also from Latvia, Lithuania and Denmark, and that Sweden intends to further work on developing the size related indicators (e.g. looking at statistical properties of the different indicators, threshold values, impact of sex to length distribution etc.).
- noted the possibility to apply funding from different funding bodies as e.g. NCM for arranging a workshop on size related coastal fish indicators and agreed to consider the topic again at FISH-PRO III 1-2019 to review potential new results from the analyses and to discuss more in detail what to do as regards size related in indicators in the future.

Recreational fisheries and ecosystem services

The Meeting

- noted the compiled information about coastal recreational fisheries in the Baltic Sea countries (document 4-1), and welcomed updated information to be submitted to jens.olsson@slu.se and petra.kaaria@helcom.fi by 28 February 2018.

- took note of the presentation on recreational fisheries in Sweden, presented by Göran Sundblad, Sweden (Presentation 3), as well as on a compilation of information on recreational fisheries in the Baltic Sea, presented by CCB (document 4-3, Presentation 4) and considered the information in relation to the future work of FISH-PRO III.
- took note of the extracts of information on ecosystem services compiled from the outcomes of recent FISH PRO meetings (document 4-2) and amended the document with new information, as included in 4-2-Rev.1.

Future work

The Meeting

- encouraged all the Contracting Parties to provide financial support to ensure monitoring and assessment of coastal fish in order for FISH-PRO III to further use and develop the coastal fish indicators, and suggested that this would be considered by State and Conservation.
- considered the project description for FISH-PRO III (document 5-1), work plans of HELCOM Fish and Fish-M, especially points 1-2 and 5-2 (document 5-2), as well as the updated HELCOM roadmap, as presented by the Chair (Presentation 1) and agreed to prepare a more concrete time plan for future work at FISH-PRO III 1-2019.
- elected Jens Olsson, Sweden, as a Project Manager for FISH-PRO III.
- discussed the inclusion of the status of migratory fish species in the fourth thematic assessment of coastal fish and suggested closer cooperation between Fish-M and FISH-PRO II (e.g. back-to-back meetings), especially when developing the next thematic assessment.
- emphasized that in the upcoming project period of FISH PRO III it is relevant to include additional methods for retrieving coastal fish data for the future monitoring and assessment activities (e.g. utilizing citizen science and commercial fisheries catches) and to look into new assessment methodologies.
- noted that the current project plan includes updating the coastal fish indicator assessments two times within the FISH-PRO III project period and that data updates are done annually and uploaded to the COOL database.
- was of the opinion that size related indicators should be the main focus of the group as regards future indicator development and noted that development of an indicator on the habitat quality for coastal fish species would also be a relevant additional topic to consider in the future.
- considered a gap analysis for coastal fish related indicators related to MSFD and BSAP, and made an initial review of the information, as included in Presentation 1. The Meeting was of the opinion that for MSFD D1 the key species are generic across Contracting Parties and fills the purpose potentially with support from a size related indicator, for D3 it is difficult to find generic indicators and species due to differences across CPs and it needs further analyses and for D4 the functional groups indicator fills the purposes.

Evaluation of recreational fisheries impacts

The Meeting

- considered the contribution of FISH-PRO to the evaluation of recreational fisheries impacts, as included in the HELCOM Roadmap, and noted the following comments:
 - This issue is highly relevant but still a substantial challenge
 - To differentiate between the effect of recreational and commercial fisheries impact is challenging if not impossible
 - It is important to consider how to take into account all other affecting impacts and pressures other than fisheries
 - The evaluation would need to focus on a few key species
- highlighted that assessing the impacts of recreational fisheries would be an essential task to consider for the group in the future, and noted, however that at the moment it is too extensive a task to be taken up by the project considering the current resources and workload. The Meeting further suggested that funding would be applied for a project on evaluating recreational fisheries impacts on coastal fish, and to involve also relevant additional experts to the work.

- further noted that such a project would need to make a review of already available and ongoing national activities and information on recreational fisheries data and to produce best practices to collect such data.
- also discussed the possibility of representing recreational fisheries pressure in the future development of coastal fish indicators, and the need for cooperation between relevant expert groups.
- further highlighted the lack of data on recreational fisheries in the Baltic Sea: in some countries there is no data, whereas the data availability is better in some countries.
- encouraged national experts to look into the possibility of applying for funding for a project on recreational fisheries impacts evaluation and to consider in detail what it would take to prepare such an evaluation and agreed to come back to the topic again in FISH-PRO III 1-2019.

First meeting of FISH-PRO III

The Meeting

- agreed to arrange the first meeting of FISH-PRO III (FISH-PRO III 1-2019) on 12-14 in February 2019, as a lunch to lunch meeting, and thanked the Secretariat for their willingness to host the meeting in the premises of HELCOM Secretariat in Katajanokka, Helsinki.
- agreed to include the following topics to the Agenda of FISH-PRO III 1-2019:
 - Publishing of the coastal fish monitoring guideline
 - Detailing the topics to focus on during the upcoming project period
 - Updating coastal fish indicators with 2018 data
 - Progress of work on size related indicators
 - Project dissemination from relevant projects (e.g. EVIDENT, ECOCOA etc.)
 - Detailed discussion on what is needed for recreational fisheries impact evaluation
 - Discussion on development of indicators on coastal fish habitats
 - Discussion on the need and possibility to involve work on anadromous fish and eel under the project

3. Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea, Helsinki, Finland, 20-24 February 2018

The Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea was hosted by the Government of Finland and with financial support by Finland and Sweden. The workshop was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in collaboration with HELCOM.

The workshop was co-chaired by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, and Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, and opened by Ms. Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

The purpose of the EBSA process is to globally describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas using the CBD scientific criteria for the EBSAs (CBD decision IX/20, annex I, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-09/cop-09-dec-20-en.pdf>) adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at its ninth meeting in 2008.

Each workshop is tasked to describe areas meeting the scientific criteria for EBSAs or other relevant criteria based on best available scientific information. As such, experts at the workshops are not expected to discuss any management issues, including threats to the areas.

For instance, EBSAs are not Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and the CBD process of describing EBSAs does not require, legally or otherwise, that they should be designated as MPAs.

The organization of the workshop in the Baltic Sea was requested based on the decision by the Contracting Parties in HELCOM (Paragraph 4.5 of the Outcome of HELCOM 38-2017, concluded intersessionally e-mail by the Executive Secretary as of 29.05.2017).

The Baltic EBSA workshop was registered by HELCOM as a voluntary commitment at the UN Ocean Conference for implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, on 5-9 June 2017, New York, (<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18382>).

The workshop participants agreed on descriptions of nine areas in the Baltic Sea meeting the EBSA criteria:

- Northern Bothnian Bay
- Kvarken Archipelago
- Åland Sea, Åland Islands and the Archipelago Sea of Finland
- Eastern Gulf of Finland
- Inner Sea of West Estonian Archipelago
- Southeastern Baltic Sea Shallows
- Southern Gotland Harbour Porpoise Area
- Fehmarn Belt
- Fladen and Stora and Lilla Middelgrund.

Five of these areas are transboundary areas, covering waters of two or more countries. Altogether, the described EBSAs cover 23% of the Baltic Sea waters.

Each area has been described using the EBSA template, through plenary and break-out sessions, and adopted by the workshop plenary for inclusion into the workshop report. The report also contains an annex highlighting unique and vulnerable ecological and biological features of the Baltic Sea in the global context. Furthermore, the report also contains information on the identified gaps and needs for further elaboration in describing areas meeting EBSA criteria, including the need for the development of scientific capacity and scientific collaboration. It reflects also that the workshop emphasized that those areas in the Baltic Sea (including MPAs) that have not been described during the workshop as meeting the EBSA criteria have not been interpreted as not being ecologically important.

The description of EBSAs is based on the scientific information and expert knowledge available at the time of the workshop, and, as the EBSA process is iterative and ongoing, there may be additional areas described as meeting the EBSA criteria in future regional or sub-regional workshops.

The workshop also discussed the significant diversity of indigenous peoples and local communities in the Baltic Sea region, which have endemic, traditional knowledge and customary governance of marine and coastal ecosystems, and the relevance of the indigenous and local knowledge of these indigenous peoples and local communities to the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria. The indigenous and local knowledge is little explored in the context of HELCOM work and this new aspect brought forward by the workshop could be considered in the future to enhance regional efforts to restore and maintain biodiversity in the Baltic Sea.

The workshop report will be submitted for consideration to the 22nd meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), scheduled for 2–7 July 2018, Montreal, Canada, and

subsequently to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP), scheduled for 10–22 November 2018, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Once approved by CBD COP, the Baltic Sea EBSAs are expected to be included in the CBD EBSA repository (www.cbd.int/ebsa) and a summary report will be transmitted to the United Nations General Assembly and its relevant processes as well as other relevant UN/international organizations.

The workshop outcome is an opportunity to highlight the fact that despite the known marine environmental problems, the unique semi-enclosed Baltic Sea does have a great ecological or biological significance.

4. PRESSURE 8-2018, Berlin, Germany, 18-20 April 2018

- took note of the update from the MARELITT Baltic project on (i) derelict fishing gear recycling possibilities; (ii) port reception facilities; and (iii) first results of the derelict fishing gear search and retrieval operations at sea (document 3-8).
- took note of the cooperation of CCB with MARELITT project.
- took note of the information on measures that are relevant for the corresponding marine litter aspects of the European Strategy for plastics in a circular economy (document 3-9).
- took note of the suggestions on work forward on a regional approach to the problem of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) (document 3-3).
- discussed the suggested activities and took note of the following views:
 - Denmark: the survey should be developed in close cooperation with the FISH group. There is a need for clarification on the figures of nets lost or abandoned in the Baltic Sea from WWF Poland in document 3-3. It may be relevant to consider in the survey the number of fishing gears that are recovered. In Denmark, there is information of 31 cases of lost fishing gear (2012- 2017) and eight of them have been retrieved;
 - Estonia: suggested to arrange a joint work with OSPAR on derelict fishing gear;
 - Finland: regional survey should analyze alternative ways to tackle the problem of the lost fishing gear than HELCOM recommendation and highlighted that HELCOM FISH group should be involved. Finland offered to deliver further editorial comments to the text of the proposal to the regional survey.
 - Germany: welcomed the survey as a good way forward; pointed out that also international legal framework should be reflected in the final review; requested clarification of the methodology and time frame to calculate the amount of ALDFG in the Baltic Sea, based on the information provided in document 3-3, and suggested that it might be one of the aspects of the survey. 3.15 The Meeting agreed to develop a regional survey taking into account the comments given by the Meeting.
- **agreed that the survey will be developed by the HELCOM EN-Marine Litter in cooperation with the Fish Group with the support of the Secretariat.** The draft survey will be submitted for final commenting to Fish and Pressure Groups by 7 June 2018. The survey will be launched on 14 June 2018 with a request for responds by 7 September 2018.
- also agreed to continue the discussion on further regional actions on ALDFG at PRESSURE 9-2028 based on the outcome of the survey.

5. Joint HELCOM-OSPAR workshop on the HELCOM indicator ‘Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear’

CG FISHDATA 1-2018

The workshop took note that other regional organizations beyond HELCOM, particularly OSPAR, are working with incidental bycatches and that joint work including workshops and joint advice requests to ICES on high risk areas could be considered to enable synergies.

HELCOM 39-2018

considered the contribution provided by OSPAR to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 as presented by Ms. Laura Piriz, Chair of the OSPAR Commission, and Ms. Susanna Salvador, Executive Secretary of OSPAR Commission (document 2-2, Presentation 1) and the proposal for further collaboration between OSPAR and HELCOM, *inter alia*, in the field of biodiversity, underwater noise, invasive species and marine litter as well as for emerging issues such as climate change and contamination by pharmaceuticals.

The Meeting welcomed the presentation by the OSPAR Commission and highlighted in particular the cooperation in the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The Meeting further pointed out the collection of fisheries data from ICES and assessing potential impacts of fisheries on the marine environment as other examples of collaboration.

Contribution by OSPAR to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, extract related to by-catch (extracted from HELCOM 39-2018 document 2-2):

Our two regional seas are directly connected and there has always been an exchange of biota between the two Convention areas in particular OSPAR Region II. In the past, concrete proposals for cooperation on biodiversity indicators by making best use of synergies between the two RSCs, have been made as a result of the joint meeting of the HELCOM and OSPAR expert groups working on developing indicators in October 2014. Several strands of cooperation have been developed. Building upon these, future possibilities for successful cooperation could include increasing efficiency by developing compatible monitoring procedures and data management (e.g. at sea bird surveys) or sharing databases (e.g. seabirds, marine mammals) as well as assessment of by-catch of seabirds and marine mammals.

GEAR 18-2018 took note of the summary record of the OSPAR BDC meeting (document 3-5) and the information on planned OSPAR work on indicators discussed at the OSPAR BDC, as well as the potential for a HELCOM-OSPAR indicator workshop on indicators.

The Meeting welcomed and supported the idea of a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop on by-catch indicator work.