



Document title	Regional maritime spatial planning work related to fish and fisheries
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Agenda Item	2 – Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance for the group
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Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	Outcome of FISH 7-2017, paragraph 2.18

Background

HELCOM FISH 7-2017 requested the Secretariat to include fish and fisheries related outcomes of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, including dates of national MSP consultations, to the document on outcomes of HELCOM meetings submitted regularly to the meetings of HELCOM Fish and to similarly inform HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG of the outcomes of HELCOM Fish.

This document contains information on regional work on MSP related to fish and fisheries as well as relevant outcomes from the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG meetings, of interest to HELCOM Fish.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Regional MSP work and fish/fisheries related issues

HELCOM is working together with VASAB to facilitate the regional MSP processes and a Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap (2013-2020) has been created to fulfill the goal of drawing up and applying maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea region by 2020 which are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea Region is for the EU Member States outlined by the EU MSP Directive and implemented by national legislation, and for the Russian Federation both outlined and implemented by national legislation. In the region both the national legislation frameworks and the maritime spatial plans based on them are in various stages of completion, from the legislation being drafted in some countries to some countries already having their legislation in place and plans being in legal force.

EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the Horizontal Action Spatial Planning

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a macro-regional strategy aiming at reinforcing cooperation within the region and promoting a balanced development in the area. The EUSBSR is divided into three objectives representing key challenges: saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity. The objectives guide an array of Policy Areas specified for macro-regional cooperation. The Policy Areas are implemented by regional stakeholders through detailed actions and flagship projects.

The Strategy also includes Horizontal Actions which function in parallel with the Policy Areas and have a cross-cutting approach on objectives, sub-objectives, policy areas, horizontal actions and flagship projects, complementing the objectives and Policy Areas.

The Horizontal Action "Encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation" (HA Spatial Planning) consists of two thematic parts – MSP, and land based spatial planning. Its target is to draw up and apply maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea Region by 2020/2021 which are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach.

The HASPS2 project aims to support objectives assigned in the Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" of the EUSBSR and is co-funded by the EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Co-lead by VASAB and HELCOM, it builds on the coordination activities started within the previous HASPS project in 2015–2016.

The main focus of the project is to improve coordination, stakeholder involvement and achievement of the strategic targets of the HA Spatial Planning by enhancing the links between the HA and implementation of the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap and the EU MSP Directive (for EU countries), strengthening an outreach and integration of the HA to other regional and European activities, and promoting and enabling future flagship projects.

The Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group

A joint co-chaired Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning was launched in October 2010 by HELCOM and the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR). The Working Group was established to ensure cooperation among the Baltic Sea Region countries for coherent regional Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes in the Baltic Sea.

The WG has regular meetings twice a year, and in their recent work they have followed up on national MSP developments including implementation of the joint road-scale MSP principles as well as on the implementation of the Baltic MSP Roadmap (2013-2020). The work has continued on creation and sharing of MSP relevant Baltic Sea regional datasets. Another topic has been facilitating and following-up on the application of the '[Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in MSP](#)', particularly, introduction of the concepts of green infrastructure and blue corridors as well as Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA¹). The group also acts as steering body for the Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" of EU SBSR.

International MSP consultation meetings

The HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group has created [guidelines for transboundary consultations, public participation and cooperation](#). According to these guidelines, international consultation meetings on the Draft Maritime Spatial Plans have been started. The 15th meeting of the MSP WG in November 2017 was held back to back with the second international consultation meeting on the Draft Maritime Spatial Plan of Polish Sea Areas. The previous (16th) meeting recently took place in Helsinki, Finland on 8-9 May 2018 and was held back to back with the first international consultation meeting on the Draft Maritime Spatial Plan of Finnish Sea Areas (7-8 May). Sweden has also arranged such a meeting earlier and will organize a second consultation meeting on June 19 2018. These voluntary consultation meetings for MSP authorities provide a chance to other countries in the region to see the draft plans during national planning processes and comment on them, which facilitates transboundary coherence of the plans.

The Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-group

The Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-group works under HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG by supporting data, information and evidence exchange for MSP processes with regard to cross-border/transboundary planning issues. The group works to facilitate the harmonization of data used in the national plans by e.g. providing a recommendation for transboundary MSP output data. It is expected that the effective use of the MSP output data model will help in transboundary consultation processes, and then will be used for maritime spatial plans which are coherent across borders. The recommendation thus aims to describe how GIS data could be structured to be comprehensible to stakeholders from other countries.

Fish and fisheries in MSP in the Baltic Sea Region

In general, fish and fisheries related issues are taken into account in MSP when allocating different sea use types to a certain area in the sea. The possible sea use types may vary between countries and marine areas, but e.g. the Baltic Sea MSP data expert group in their draft output data recommendation have outlined three types for both fishing (industrial, recreational and small boat) and aquaculture (fish, mussel, plant). A species conservation site type (for e.g. fish spawning areas) has also been described. By spatially coordinating the allocation of different sea use types in the marine areas, the national maritime spatial plans aim to ensure that the often differing sectoral interests of marine area users are met while ecological sustainability is maintained. To facilitate this, the involvement of local stakeholders (such as fishermen) is of key importance in the planning process.

Fish and fisheries issues in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG

Fish or fisheries related issues have not directly been on the agenda of the MSP WG in the recent years, but have been discussed on occasion.

Outcome of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 5-2017

3.20 *The Meeting took note that Finland has already collected reliable information on nursery areas of commercial fish species (VELMU database). Despite the data cover only Finnish coastal areas the models applied for this work could be utilized for other areas. The Meeting also noted that BALTFISH forum and other fishery organizations can be involved in collection of the data for MSP. The Meeting pointed out the need of the advice from the fisheries managers and scientists to improve usability of aggregated data on fisheries in MSP.*

Outcome of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 14-2017

3.2 *The Meeting noticed the great work done by MSP planners in Poland revealing opinions of local stakeholders, particularly local fishermen society, and taking them into account in the particular plans. The Meeting noted a broad scale of involvement of public society and professional associations into the MSP- related consultations.*

Outcome of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 12-2016

5.8 *The Meeting also took note of the information by the HELCOM Secretariat on the release of data products on fisheries effort and intensity fishing activity based on Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data, requested from ICES in a form of the ICES advice. The data products represent the first regional and free access dataset on fishing intensity and effort at this resolution.*

Outcome of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 11-2015

5.9 *The Meeting took note that HELCOM has an ongoing process on to collecting information on lost fishing gear, wrecks, dumped munition etc.*

HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and MSP projects

The WG has been involved in [the Baltic SCOPE project](#) and is currently following its successor, the Pan Baltic Scope led by Sweden (SwaM). The Baltic SCOPE project as one of its results produced a set of [recommendations on MSP across borders](#), in which fisheries are taken into account as one sector of marine use. One of the aims of the Pan Baltic Scope project is to improve available information on important fish habitats as part of the activity on green infrastructure (this specific activity is led by Latvia), and the project will also be working on the socio-economic and environmental implications of fishing and aquaculture for coastal communities.

A joint HELCOM/Pan Baltic Scope workshop is proposed to be organized in December 2018 for experts who have been previously involved in Essential Fish habitat (EFH) development regionally to ensure acceptance of the first results of the PanBalticScope project. This proposal for the joint workshop will be considered by the meeting of the State and Conservation working group on 14-18 May.

The project is aiming to produce pan-Baltic scale maps of EFH. Experiences from national MSP and the project BalticScope have clearly indicated that different approaches were used nationally to map EFH in MSP. Most of the fish stocks and their habitats are distributed across the borders. For the most commercially important fish species information about distribution and essential habitats are available from literature, international and national scientific surveys as well as outputs from models. There is no common agreement on mapping of common stocks for neighboring countries even if they used the same information source (see for example Eastern cod spawning habitats in Gotland Deep). Examples from previous projects clearly show that there is no common agreement on what habitats should be included in MSP – observed, modelled, historical, potential etc. Due to changing environmental conditions EFH are

temporally variable, and as a result some of the mapped habitats are overestimated, whereas some of them are underestimated. To ensure improved quality of produced maps PanBalticScope project has developed a step by step approach:

- 1) Producing a questionnaire which was sent to national project representatives to collect available information about data used for mapping of EFH in national MSP. The project will focus on commercially important fish species (sprat, herring, cod, flounder, plaice, dab and brill) however national project partners were asked to provide some additional information about other fish species. The survey includes information about spawning and nursery grounds.
- 2) Results from the questionnaire will be collected and analyzed by the Latvian project partner. Overview of the results will be presented at the first Activity's Workshop in Riga on 29-30 May. The main task for the workshop is to identify possible fish species for which pan Baltic scale maps of EFH could be produced within the project time.
- 3) For each fish species, a "fish champion" will be selected among different project partners. Together with experts from other partners this person will be responsible for one of the fish species. The work of every fish sub-group will be organized by correspondence and via web meetings if necessary.
- 4) The draft habitat maps will be collected by the Latvian project partner.
- 5) For quality assurance and to ensure the acceptance of produced maps a joint HELCOM/Pan Baltic Scope workshop is proposed to be organized in December 2018 in Riga. Experts who have previously been involved in EFH development regionally should be invited to the workshop.

The agreed EFH maps will be used in the PanBaltic Scope project concept of Green infrastructure for mapping of ecological values.

The workshop would consider and suggest how existing knowledge gaps regarding regionally harmonized essential fish habitat maps could be filled, and propose EFH maps for supporting MSP in the HELCOM region but also serve other purposes. For example, such maps could be useful in the next HOLAS III.

More detailed information on HELCOM work on MSP is available via these links:

[Status of national MSPs in the Baltic Sea Region](#)

[Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group](#)

[Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group](#)

[Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning \(MSP\) in the Baltic Sea area](#)

