



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Continuation of the project on Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management

FISH-PRO III 1-2019

Helsinki, Finland, 12-14 February 2019

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Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

With regard to the continuation of the FISH-PRO II project as FISH-PRO III for years 2018-2023, STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 considered and endorsed, and FISH 7-2017 considered and supported the project proposal. The proposal was approved by HOD 53-2017 ([Outcome](#) para. 3.58).

This document contains the approved proposal for the continuation of the project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management (FISH-PRO III), as background for discussions and planning for the future work of FISH-PRO III.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to use the project proposal for planning the future work of FISH-PRO III.

Project proposal for HELCOM FISH-PRO III

Project Description

1. Title of the project: Project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management (HELCOM FISH-PRO III)

2. Project Manager(s): [Jens Olsson, Sweden]

3. Proposing party:

Contracting Party: _____

Commission: _____

Subsidiary body: _____

Heads of Delegation: _____

Executive Secretary: _____ X _____

4. The body supervising the project: HELCOM State and Conservation and HELCOM FISH

5. Targets and activities

5.1. Policy relevance

Since the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the environmental dimensions of fish and fisheries has developed to an important part of HELCOM work. A dedicated HELCOM working group on fisheries and environment matters, HELCOM Fish, was established in 2014 and considers regional best practices to minimise environmental impacts of fisheries and aquaculture. In addition, the assessment activities of the HELCOM State and Conservation working group considers fish as a component of the Baltic Sea marine ecosystem. This fish and environment part of HELCOM work involves both environmental and fisheries administrations of the Contracting Parties, but also industry organisations as well as NGOs. Work on coastal fish and fish species that are not assessed or managed internationally constitute an important, and particularly successful, part of this regional work on fish.

Coastal fish communities are important components of the Baltic Sea ecosystems, and many species of coastal fish are of a high socio-economic value for coastal societies, small-scale coastal fisheries and recreational fishing. The status of coastal fish communities serves as an indicator of coastal ecosystem health, reflecting pressures like eutrophication, fishing and degradation of coastal habitats. The structure of coastal fish communities is also dependent on climate change impacts, and species of coastal fish might modify other ecosystem components through ecological interactions. Given the dramatic changes in Baltic Sea ecosystems and coastal fish communities during the last decades, attention and focus should be devoted to this component of the ecosystem.

The project activities aim to support the implementation of the Helsinki Convention, including its Baltic Sea Action Plan, and, for those Contracting Parties being EU members, relevant EU legislation, e.g. Water Framework Directive (WFD), Habitats Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), as well as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EU SBSR).

5.2. Project objectives

The FISH-PRO III project aims to support ecosystem-based management of coastal fish communities in the Baltic Sea coastal countries through further developing regionally harmonised monitoring and assessment

methodologies, conducting assessments of coastal fish and by proposing ecosystem-based management measures. The objectives of the proposed continuation of the FISH-PRO II are:

1. Knowledge: to update and improve knowledge about occurrence, distribution, population and threat and/or decline of coastal fish based on all relevant data.
2. Assessment and monitoring: to further develop different assessment and monitoring methodologies for coastal fish, including indicators with threshold and reference values.
3. Recommendations:
 - proposing ecosystem-based measures on management of coastal fish communities in the Baltic Sea for the consideration of HELCOM Fish and State and Conservation groups, as appropriate.
 - provide advice to national authorities and ongoing HELCOM work on implementation of coastal fish related actions in the BSAP.

The project will continue and build upon the work carried out by the expert network on coastal fish and FISH PRO project since 2003. The continuation of the work is justified by the need to:

- Further develop, regularly update and operationalize the core indicators on coastal fish
- Further develop additional core indicators (i.e. size related indicators)
- Contribute to HELCOM thematic and integrated assessments on the status of the marine environment and of human-induced pressures as needed, including i.e. the updating of the HELCOM Red List of species
- Provide recommendations for ecosystem-based management of coastal fish

5.3. Tasks and activities

HELCOM fully acknowledges the EC competence on commercial fisheries. The project will provide added-value in relation to activities carried out within the EU framework. The outcomes of the project are expected to not only benefit and contribute to the work within HELCOM, but also to various international frameworks and activities carried out at the national level.

FISH-PRO III will support the implementation of the Terms of Reference and Work Plans of the HELCOM [Working group on the state of the environment and nature conservation](#) and the [Group on ecosystem-based sustainable Fisheries](#) (including also the task force on migratory fish species).

The project is expected to carry out the following activities:

- Produce a thematic assessment on coastal fish, including an assessment of status and proposals for ecosystem-based management measures for coastal fish communities
- Further harmonize and develop monitoring strategies for coastal fish in the Baltic, including:
 - Support the development of relevant research to evaluate the use of alternative data sources in addition to gill-net monitoring to complement the assessment of coastal fish community status, for example commercial catch statistics and crowd sourcing
 - Work towards further expanding the spatial coverage of coastal fish monitoring in the Baltic, by including additional monitoring programs and Contracting Parties that have not previously been engaged in the network
 - Update the HELCOM Monitoring manual with regard to coastal fish monitoring when needed and as requested by the State and Conservation Working Group
- Regularly update and further develop (as needed) the HELCOM core indicators on coastal fish and continue to develop additional indicators for coastal fish, if deemed necessary to fulfill the BSAP and for the Contracting Parties being EU Member States the MSFD framework, including development of assessment methodologies and methods for defining thresholds values and reference levels
- Provide input on fish and lamprey species to relevant HELCOM groups and projects, e.g. HELCOM FISH, FISH-M, State and Conservation, e.g.:

- Contribute to an overview of data collection activities and Contracting Parties' work plans, related to i.a. on recreational fisheries.
 - Provide expert proposals for restoration programs and management measures for coastal fish species upon request.
- Support the development of relevant research, including e.g. investigating the effects of essential habitats and other externalities on core indicator responses

The products/outcomes will be coordinated with activities on implementation of the Helsinki Convention (including the BSAP) and other corresponding international activities, e.g. the implementation of the EU WFD, EU Habitats Directive and EU MSFD and the EU SBSR.

6. Expected results

The main project deliverable will be an updated thematic assessment on coastal fish, including an assessment of status and recommendations on ecosystem-based management measures for reducing the pressures of human activities on the marine environment. The project will contribute to reporting of relevant data and the periodic updating of the core indicators.

In addition, the project will provide annual progress reports to relevant HELCOM group meetings and contribute to the work of relevant HELCOM working groups and projects upon requested and as described in the section 5.3 (Tasks and activities) of this proposal.

The Project Manager is to follow the [HELCOM risk assessment procedure](#).

7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities ___yes___no

8. Timetable

The project period is five years, i.e., the project will be carried out from mid-2018 to mid-2023 as continuation to FISH-PRO II project

9. Budget

9.1. Total costs

The total costs for HELCOM from 2018 to 2023 are estimated to be 27 000 EUR.

9.2. Funds requested from HELCOM

Financial year	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	Total
Source of financing	HELCOM budget	HELCOM budget	HELCOM budget	HELCOM budget	HELCOM budget	HELCOM budget
Project management, including data handling and meeting facilitation	5 500	5 500	5 500	5 500	5 500	27 500

In addition, the project is authorized to use any remaining balance from the previous project (FISH-PRO II).

10. Additional requests

10.1. From the Contracting Parties

The Contracting Parties are expected to cover the travel expenses for the participation of the national experts in the project group meetings.

10.2. From the Secretariat

The Project shall be supported by the Secretariat.

11. Procedure of nomination of the Project team members

The present FISH-PRO II project members include the following experts representing all countries around the Baltic Sea:

Name	Institution	Country
Elliot John Brown	DTU Aqua	Denmark
Josianne Støttrup	DTU Aqua	Denmark
Lauri Saks	Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu	Estonia
Roland Svirgsden	Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu	Estonia
Markus Vetemaa	Estonian Marine Institute	Estonia
Marit Matik	Estonian Ministry of the Interior	Estonia
Ulvi Paadam	Ministry of the Environment of Estonia	Estonia
Antti Lappalainen	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Finland
Outi Heikinheimo	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Finland
Kaj Ådjers	Provincial Government of Åland Islands	Finland (Åland Islands)
Meri Kallasvuo	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Finland
Peter Möller	Fish and Environment Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany
Marina Carstens	Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Germany
Thomas Schaarschmidt	State Agency for Agriculture, Food Safety and Fisheries of Vorpommern-Mecklenburg (LALLF M-V)	Germany
Eriks Kruze	Latvian Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment (BIOR)	Latvia
Laura Briekmane	Latvian Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment (BIOR)	Latvia
Didzis Ustups	Latvian Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment (BIOR)	Latvia
Egle Jakubaviciute	Nature Research Centre, Institute of Ecology, Laboratory of marine ecology	Lithuania
Justas Dainys	Nature Research Centre, Institute of Ecology, Laboratory of marine ecology	Lithuania
Linas Lozys	Nature Research Centre, Institute of Ecology, Laboratory of marine ecology	Lithuania
Zilvinas Putys	Nature Research Centre, Institute of Ecology, Laboratory of marine ecology	Lithuania
Adam Lejk	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute	Poland
Szymon Smolinski	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute	Poland
Andrzej Ginalski	General Directorate for the Environmental Protection	Poland
Justyna Szumlicz	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Poland
Katarzyna Kasprzak	General Directorate for Environmental Protection	Poland
Leszek Dybiec	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Poland
Sergey Shibaev	Kaliningrad State Technical University	Russia
Lena Bergström	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	Sweden
Jens Olsson	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	Sweden

12. Signatures of the project manager

Jens Olsson

Project Manager of HELCOM FISH-PRO II

13. Opinion of the chair of the relevant body

State and Conservation and Fish working groups support the proposal.

14. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

Executive Secretary supports the project proposal.

15. Decision of the Heads of Delegation

_____ to establish _____ not to establish