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Background

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) article 20 requires the European Commission to publish a first evaluation report on the implementation of MSFD by 2019. Article 20.3b specifically requires “a review of the status of the marine environment in the Community, undertaken in coordination with the European Environment Agency and the relevant regional marine and fisheries organisations and conventions”.

In April 2015, EEA hosted a workshop with participation of the European Commission, representatives from the HELCOM and OSPAR Secretariats, the chair of the ICG-MAQ (OSPAR) and ICES. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the ongoing work in the Regional Seas Conventions to develop assessment reports, that will also be used by Contracting Parties being EU Member States in the MSFD 2018 reporting, and to start discussing the scope of the 2019 review of the marine environment and how the anticipated coordination can be realized.

This document contains the meeting report from the workshop.

Action required

The Meeting is requested to:

- take note of the information.

Meeting Report

Meeting to discuss cooperation among EEA, OSPAR, HELCOM, UNEP/MAP, BSC and ICES for the benefit of Regional and European marine assessments

April 15, 2015 at EEA premises in Copenhagen

Meeting participants: Jo Foden (OSPAR Secretariat), Colin Moffat (Chair, ICG-MAQ), Ulla Li Zweifel (HELCOM secretariat), Sebastian Valanko (ICES), David Connor (EC), Trine Christiansen (EEA), Constança Belchior (EEA), Johnny Reker (EEA), Cristina Herbon (JNCC-ETC/ICM)

Absent: Virginie Hart (UNEP/MAP), Irina Makarenko (BSC secretariat)

Background

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) has with its article 20, a provision for the European Commission to publish a first evaluation report on the implementation of this Directive by 2019 at the latest. The art 20.3b requires a review of the status of the marine environment in the Community, undertaken in coordination with the European Environment Agency and the relevant regional marine and fisheries organisations and conventions.

In April 2015, EEA hosted a workshop with the Commission, the RSC secretariats, the chair of the ICG-MAQ (OSPAR) and ICES to start a reflection on what this coordinated activity might entail. All RSC were invited but only HELCOM, OSPAR. The workshop helped clarify important commonalities among the regional and EEA assessments.

Summary

The aim of the workshop was to seek better communication and discuss potential collaboration with the Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) to support the preparation of the MSFD Art. 20.3b report. The background note prepared before the meeting and the meeting agenda can be found in Annex 1. The discussion was focussed on the frameworks underpinning the assessments, and the available report outlines. The assessment framework that underpins the EEA 'State of Europe's Seas' was seen as a helpful starting point for the outline of the 2019 assessments, and in line with ideas coming from RSCs. Similarly, the report outlines available from HELCOM and OSPAR, and the EEA 'State of Europe's Seas' report show large commonalities between the assessment themes, although approaches taken within themes may vary. Please note that no outlines from the Barcelona Convention or the Black Sea Convention were available at the time of the meeting.

2015 EEA State of Europe's Seas Report

The report has been developed by EEA and ETC ICM. The aim is to assess whether Europe's seas can be considered healthy, clean, undisturbed, and productive. The report includes:

- The establishment of a snapshot of the current state of Europe's seas by looking into the main ecosystem characteristics of our seas, i.e. species, habitats and processes.
- An assessment of the pressures and impacts affecting marine ecosystems and the human activities causing these pressures.
- An overview of the availability, coherence and quality of relevant marine information.

The data and information sources used for the compilation of the report were a combination of EU policy reporting (MSFD, Habitats and Birds Directives, Common Fisheries Policy), EEA marine indicators, EU Reports, and other information from EU and International organisations. This report will help to inform marine policy and support further development of 'ecosystem-based management'.

At the core of the report there is an Analytical Framework that has been developed looking at the linkages between the 'Driver, Pressure, State, Impact, Response' model (DPSIR), MSFD, and other reporting requirements. The framework presents the relationships between ecosystem state, ecosystems services and socio-economic systems, looking at economic drivers affecting the increase or decrease of activities, key human activities acting on the environment, and what changes and/or effects pressures will have on ecosystem state (biodiversity, and ecosystem processes and functions). The framework has been used to structure the chapters Healthy seas (state), clean and undisturbed areas (pressures) and Productive seas (human activities) of the EEA 2015 report.

A key issue for the compilation of this report has been the number of 'unknowns' and 'not assessed' in EU policy reporting. Therefore, in order to improve the production of the next report, three key aspects should be tackled: to make better use of information available at the regional level, aggregation of MS and/or regional assessments to the European level, and to improve assessment of cumulative pressures and ecosystem change.

HELCOM 2018 HOLAS II assessment

HELCOM is developing the second Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea through the HOLAS II project that started in late 2014 and will run until mid-2018. It is expected that the holistic assessment, or parts of it, will be used by MSs as a joint roof report in the MSFD Article 8 reporting in 2018.

A set of core indicator forms the basis for HELCOM thematic and holistic assessments. Core indicators have a quantitative definition of Good Environmental Status (GES) that enables aggregation of indicators to arrive at the status of thematic areas, e.g. eutrophication or biodiversity. The current set of HELCOM core indicators contains gaps for the follow-up of goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the MSFD, and the development of indicators is expected to continue.

The holistic assessment will provide assessment of the status of the Baltic Sea, pressures and resulting impacts, and also social and economic aspects. It will address all MSFD descriptors. The assessment will also include a section on measures towards achieving GES with a focus on regionally agreed actions in HELCOM.

The status assessment and GES-boundaries and indicators are determined at the relevant spatial scale for the respective indicators, and it is based on the system of HELCOM sub-divisions of the Baltic Sea. The project is developing assessment tools for the assessment of environmental status based on aggregation of indicators within these sub-divisions. The pressure component is expected to cover spatial distribution and trends of main human activities and pressures, as well as the application of pressure indices to assess cumulative impacts.

A draft assessment is planned to be produced by mid-2017 to serve national consultation purposes, which is estimated to take about six months. The final assessment will be produced by mid-2018. The aim is to base the assessment on data in the period 2011-2016 for as many elements covered by the assessment as possible, an approach that will require that assessments are updated to include 2016 data in the finalization of the report.

OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017

The Intermediate Assessment 2017 (IA2017) has dual purposes – the OSPAR North East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) and supporting Contracting Parties that are Member States in their reporting for MSFD – based on common indicators and thematic assessments. The OSPAR Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme¹ is the mechanism to implement the NEAES. This programme describes the strategy, themes and products that OSPAR Contracting Parties are committed to deliver, through collaborative efforts in OSPAR, over the period 2014-2021 with reference to the relevant provisions of: the OSPAR Convention (Art. 6 and Annex IV, and Art. 8), in particular as support for the implementation of the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy ('OSPAR Strategy'), and; the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, Directive 2008/56/EC)². The NEAES and MSFD are well aligned, avoiding the need to conduct two different assessments for regional and national purposes. For the IA2017 the thematic committees (e.g. Biodiversity Committee, Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee) have recommended to the OSPAR Commission which common indicators and other thematic assessments will contribute to the Intermediate Assessment for each of the five OSPAR Regions. At present OSPAR has 41 common indicators to be assessed. Currently five levels (scales) of geographic reporting units have been proposed. Assessments will be

¹ JAMP 2014 – 2021 (Agreement 2014-02)

² Acknowledging that Contracting Parties which are EU Member States are bound by provisions relating to regional cooperation (MSFD Art.6; including, for this programme, in the sphere of monitoring and assessment), whereas other Contracting Parties agreed in the Bergen Statement to facilitate this regional coordination, and they continue to take part in relevant OSPAR monitoring and assessment activities

conducted at the scale relevant to each common indicator and will be reported at the most appropriate geographic scale.

The report will include sections on climate change, physiographic and prevailing conditions, human activities and the socio-economic characteristics of the OSPAR Regions, pressures arising from human activities biodiversity status and an ecosystem assessment outlook. The assessments will be based on individual common indicator assessment sheets, but these will not be aggregated to provide an overall assessment of GES. However it is expected that the OSPAR Quality Status Report (QSR) 2021 will contain a fully integrated ecosystem assessment. The IA2017 will be produced as an online assessment product, with data and metadata made available via the OSPAR data and information management system (ODIMS). The assessment periods will differ for the indicators, but it is expected that data up to 2016 will be included.

Within the framework of MSFD the Kattegat and The Sound are integral parts of the North Sea sub-region. However, as the Kattegat is shared by both Conventions its assessment could be incorporated in both HOLAS II and IA2017. Sweden and Denmark are developing a proposal in which the assessment shall be primarily consistent with OSPAR common indicators and the IA2017, complemented with HELCOM's core indicators. This is essential for the assessment to be able to be aggregated at the North Sea regional scale.

The two Regional Sea Conventions are already sharing information on the common/core indicators and working together where indicators can be developed jointly. Some of the OSPAR indicators are candidate (not fully adopted yet) and will be further developed to become common indicators.

Key points of discussion

The presentations of the HELCOM, OSPAR and EEA showed a large degree of commonality on major topics covered by the assessments. Also, all three assessment reports are indicator-based. The UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention is currently developing its Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (to be agreed in early 2016, at the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention) and foresees its Second State of Environment Report in 2017, following up on its Initial Assessment carried out in 2011 and on the existing assessment practice of MED POL and other UNEP/MAP components. The timetable and outline for this work still needs development, and this is also the situation in case of the Bucharest Convention.

Both the HELCOM and the OSPAR secretariats expressed interest in future cooperation, but also highlighted that the active engagement and coordination with RSCs to support the 2019 assessment would be dependent on resources and agreement by Contracting Parties.

An important point is that the EEA's 2019 assessment will not be reprocessing the outputs from the RSCs. An underlying premise is that a way of simplifying the 2019 reporting would be to focus on indicators and specific topics that will provide added-value, and avoid repetition of the RSCs work. Issues around the data raised by the RSCs need to be addressed, for example that the 2019 assessment should be based on data products and not re-assessments using raw data.

The discussions in the meeting gave support to the roof model (Figure 1, Annex 1) that has been underlying the work of the Commission. However, it also clarified that the assumptions being made about the nature of the collaboration and its planned outcomes will need clarification, and that further thinking is required, for example on the expectations of Article 20.3 b to "review of the status of the marine environment in the Community".

Comparison of outlines

Following the meeting, EEA and ETC/ICM has compared the outlines of the HOLAS II assessments, the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment, and the EEA state of Europe's Seas (Table 1). The outlines of OSPAR, HELCOM, and EEA assessments were discussed in the April 2015 workshop. The reflections around the outlines very much focused on how similar the approaches were at the broad outline scale. Going into the specifics of each assessment there are differences in methods used. In particular HELCOM has gone further towards integrated state and cumulative pressure assessments than either OSPAR or the EEA.

The outline order is different between the three assessments, but we have here grouped the information into main assessment building blocks. Each block has been structured around the elements of Art. 8.1.a, Art. 8.1.b, and human activities. The large consistency in structure among the outlines led to a proposal of a

common structure for Art.8 and an EU level Art. 20.3b assessment presented to WG-DIKE on 19/7 (paper available on CIRCABC). The presented proposal will be reflected upon based on MS inputs and presented again at the next WG-DIKE meeting in October as well as to WG-GES.

Table 1. Comparison of assessment outlines between the EEA, OSPAR and HELCOM

Overall topic	OSPAR	HELCOM	EEA 2015 State of Europe's Seas
Objective	Intermediate Assessment 2017 Dual purposes: The North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy and the MSFD for EU MSs	Holistic assessment: To follow up the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the MSFD for EU MSs	To assess whether Europe's seas can be considered healthy, clean, undisturbed, and productive
State (Art. 8.1.a)	<p>Biodiversity status:</p> <p>Based on biodiversity common indicators and biennial assessment of the status of the OSPAR network of MPAs.</p> <p>(Please note the biodiversity indicators are not only for D1, 4 and 6, but also address other Descriptors)</p>	<p>Assessment of the status of ecosystem health (i.e. to assess achievement of GES) that both covers state and pressure-based descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State based descriptors (D1, part of D3, D4, D6) assessed together as well as separate assessments of main biological elements: birds, fish, mammals, seabed and pelagic habitats, and selection of trends in key parameters • Pressure based descriptors (D2, part of D3, D5, parts of D6, D8+9, D10, D11) assessed separately, selection of trends in key parameters <p>Supporting parameters to interpret results of the assessment (e.g. change in climatic factors)</p>	<p>Healthy Seas or state of biodiversity and ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seabed habitats • Water column habitats • Marine invertebrates • Marine fish • Turtles • Seabirds and waterbirds • Marine mammals <p>Marine food webs</p> <p>Marine ecosystems</p>

Overall topic	OSPAR	HELCOM	EEA 2015 State of Europe's Seas
<p>Pressures and impacts, including human activity (Art. 8.1.b)</p>	<p>Pressures arising from human activities. Spatial distribution and trends of pressures and activities based on OSPAR monitoring and indicators, as far as these are available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eutrophication: Based on D5 common indicators, the Common Procedure, riverine nutrient assessment and atmospheric nutrient deposition assessment • Hazardous substances: Based on D8 common indicators, full CEMP assessment and assessments of heavy metal (Hg, Cd and Pb) inputs via water and air • Radioactive substances: Based on Fourth Periodic Evaluation assessment of trends in discharges • Offshore oil and gas industry: Assessment of impacts coming from activities: discharges; decommissioned pipelines; decommissioning cutting piles, and; overall impact assessment • Marine litter Assessment of the quantities, types, sources and trends of marine litter, including the impact of litter on the marine environment, including assessment of D10 common indicators • Underwater energy, noise Assessment of the pressure from underwater noise including D11 indicators • Other human activities Trend assessments of annual data on dumping of waste or other matter at sea 	<p>A planned section focusing on human activities and pressures in terms input of anthropogenic matter and extraction of marine resources. <i>Note that pressure-based descriptors are planned to be addressed in the section on "assessment of status of ecosystem health" (row above)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial distribution of main and/or trends in main human activities and pressures, including core pressure indicator(s), Cumulative assessment of pressures using pressure indices, spatial representation 	<p>Clean and undisturbed seas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical loss and damage to the seafloor • Extraction of fish and shellfish • Introduction of non-indigenous species • Eutrophication • Contamination • Marine litter • Underwater noise and other forms of energy • Climate change

Overall topic	OSPAR	HELCOM	EEA 2015 State of Europe's Seas
Climate Change	Climate change/Prevailing physiographic conditions	<i>Climate change is included as part of other sections</i>	Climate change as a pressure (see above)
Uses and human activities (art 8.1.c)	(Human activities are part of Art.8.1b of the Directive)	<i>Human activities are included above together with pressures</i>	Productive Seas (human activities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-based activities • Extraction of living resources • Production of living resources • Extraction of non-living resources and disposal of waste • Transport and shipbuilding • Tourism and recreation • Man-made structures • Energy production – offshore renewables • Energy production-oil and gas • Research and surveys • Military
Socio-economic impacts (Art. 8.1.c) and BD2020 Strategy	Socio-economic characteristics of the OSPAR area	Social and economic aspects Conceptual outline of the link between state and socio-economic aspects, with qualitative examples and possibly a case study	The sea's natural capital and ecosystem services
Measures and policy response		Measures towards reaching GES, focusing on regionally agreed targets and measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eutrophication – breaking the trends • Marine protected areas – an example of successful EU policy? • The long-term challenge of achieving sustainable fisheries in the EU • EU's marine knowledge

ANNEX 1

Meeting to discuss cooperation among EEA, OSPAR, HELCOM, UNEP/MAP, BSC and ICES for the benefit of Regional and European marine assessments

European Environment Agency, Kongens Nytorv 6, Copenhagen

April 15, 14:00 – April 16, 16:00

Background

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) has with its article 20 a provision for the European Commission to publish a first evaluation report on the implementation of this Directive by 2019 at the latest. Article 20 contains a number of requirements for this report, including art 20.3b which requires a review of the status of the marine environment in the Community, undertaken in coordination with the European Environment Agency and the relevant regional marine and fisheries organisations and conventions.

In 2018, Member States will report on their second MSFD article 8 assessment on the current state of their marine waters, the pressures and impacts upon it and on the uses of their marine waters (together with updates on their determination of GES and environmental targets under MSFD art. 9 and 10).

OSPAR and HELCOM are in the process of preparing regional assessment reports – OSPAR's Intermediate Assessment 2017 and HELCOM's HOLAS II. These are due to be prepared by 2017 as 'roof reports' to be directly used by Member States in these regions as part of their 2018 MSFD reporting requirements. UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention is currently developing its Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (to be agreed in early 2016, at the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention) and foresees its Second State of Environment Report in 2017, following up on its Initial Assessment carried out in 2011 and on the existing assessment practice of MED POL and other UNEP/MAP components. Also we would like further information on how the BSC is supporting the process.

The EEA wishes establish collaboration with the Regional Sea Conventions to both secure and make substantial use of these regional and national status reports in preparation of the art. 20.3b European assessment, together with other relevant sources (e.g. Habitats and Birds Directive and WFD reporting). The EEA will shortly be publishing its 'State of Europe's Seas assessment', which will provide a starting point for the possible overall structure of the 2019 assessment, in particular with its chapters 3, 4 and 5 that relate to state, pressures and human activities.

It is thus very timely to initiate a discussion on how these assessments can best be designed to support one another and also how to secure the necessary information flows from the regional to the European level, to properly scope the reality of the 2019 assessment (Figure 1). As such the 2019 assessment will be a first European assessment in the legal setting of the MSFD, and the common elements on which it is built on could potentially be co-created with the RSCs. The setting around its production should be one that we would continue to build upon for the up-dates required every 6 years.

Objectives

The objective of the meeting will be two fold. The main emphasis will be on a technical discussion on the practical development of a coordinated assessment in 2019. Secondly, the meeting will also need to agree on how we establish a more formal framework for our continued collaboration. At the EEA we feel that this is a good opportunity to touch upon some process steps for how to achieve this.

Comparison of assessments

During the meeting we would like to compare the scope and outlines of the 2017 RSC assessments (or draft ideas if outlines are not yet available) with the EEA 2015 State of Europe's seas. The idea of such a comparison is to better understand how the RSC reports can fit into a European assessment and also to better understand how similar the assessments are in their main objectives, overall structure, the main topics addressed (e.g. which aspects of state, pressures, uses, etc are included) and data sources used. To prepare this discussion, it would be very helpful if you could provide us with scope and draft outlines (or equivalent) before the meeting. We also plan to include the EEA 2015 State of Europe's seas in the comparison. We understand that the outlines might need some reflection, and there will be time for this during the meeting.

The use of indicators

The meeting also needs to reflect on the use of indicators. The MSFD, and in particular the Commission Decision has a strong emphasis on indicators in support of the 11 descriptors. Based on the work conducted by DG-ENV, Deltares and EEA on availability of common/core indicators, we would like to discuss the information flows available for supporting regional and European assessments as well as the role of indicator assessments.

This discussion will be supported by an EEA overview of RSC indicators and the topics they support. Also we will need to discuss the geographical coverage of indicators, how the indicators are structured in the regional and EEA setting to see whether there is scope for streamlining their presentation. Practicalities of sharing indicators (e.g. by using the EEA Indicator Management System) and their possible relation to MSFD art 19.3 will also need to be reflected upon.

Producing an integrated assessment

The Commission is developing a concept for integrating assessments across indicators to arrive at an overarching assessment of GES. This concept is being articulated in the MSFD cross-cutting paper and will be presented for reflection and discussion. This session should also include a discussion on approaches used in the RSC for producing integrated assessments.

Developing a forward process

In view of the need for the OSPAR and HELCOM assessments to contribute to the 2018 reporting requirements of Member States, and the necessary lead-in time for their preparation, the meeting might wish to suggest a forward process to support compatibility with MSFD needs in both 2018 (art 8) and 2019 (art 20). Such suggestions could be discussed within WG DIKE (and possibly WG GES) with initial proposals to be presented in June 2015. The meeting should also aim to conclude on a suitable framework for continuing the cooperation between EEA and the Regional Sea Conventions, and propose next steps.

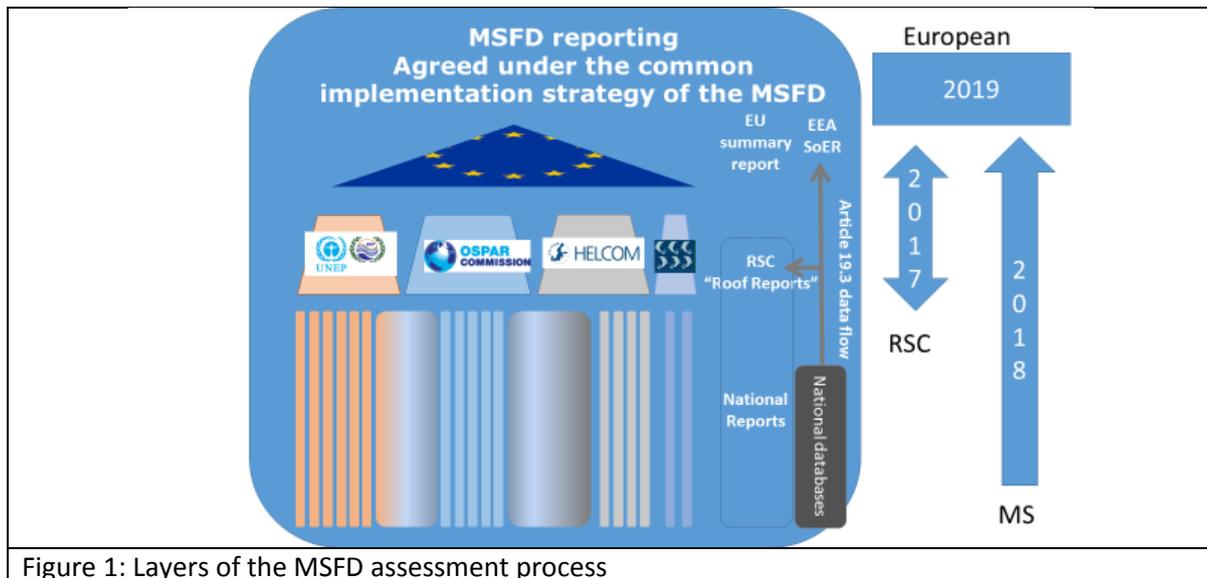


Figure 1: Layers of the MSFD assessment process

Preparation of the April meeting

The idea of the workshop is to develop it in collaboration. Hence the draft agenda below is deliberately left open, and suggestions for a different organisation on other sessions are welcome. We would appreciate feedback up until March 30th, on both the agenda and also contributions on scope and draft outline of RSC assessments. We will then circulate an updated agenda after the Easter break.

Draft agenda

Proposed sessions (each of approximately 1 hr 45 mins duration)

April 15, starting at 14:00

Opening

Tour de table on expectations towards the cooperation between EEA/OSPAR/HELCOM/UNEP-MAP/BSC in support of regional and European assessments.

Session 1: presentation of assessments

Each region and EEA to be invited to present their assessment, its objectives and its outline, as well as the established processes to develop the assessments.

Session 2: comparison of outlines

EEA will present a comparison of the outlines for further discussion and reflection

Conclusion: at which level should regional and European assessments be comparable.

April 16, starting at 9:00

Session 3: The role of indicators in RSC assessments

How is it anticipated that common/core indicators will be built into the regional assessments

Session 4: Integration across indicators. How are indicators to be combined to produce integrated assessments of state and pressure? DG-ENV to present assessment model for further discussion

Session 5: Information needs for European assessments – the role of RSC indicators in a European assessment, and associated information flows. Reflection on the types of data/information (from regional

indicator assessments) that could be useful at European level and practicalities for making the information available.

This sessions should also include reflection on operational issues like the geographical scope of the assessment, consistency of assessment areas with MSFD (sub)regions, and geographical coverage of indicators.

Session 6: Conclusions on the need for a forward process in regards to working group DIKE and possibly working group GES, as well as on a suitable framework for continuing the collaboration between EEA and the Regional Sea Conventions, including a rotation in hosting the meetings.

Agreement on next steps.

16:00 meeting close