



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach
Helsinki, Finland, 17-18 November 2016

GEAR 15-2016

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Background

This document contains extracts from relevant HELCOM meetings held since the last meeting of the Gear Group.

1. [HOD 50-2016](#), 15-16 June, Laulasmaa, Estonia;
2. [HOLAS II 6-2016](#), 4-6 October, Helsinki, Finland;
3. [PRESSURE 5-2016](#), 25-27 October, Warsaw, Poland.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Extracts from meetings of relevance for the Gear Group

HOD 50-2016

Introduction

- The Meeting welcomed the new Head of Delegation of Denmark, Ms. Lone Reerso Hansen.

Outgoing and incoming chairmanship in HELCOM

- The Meeting took note of the information by Chair on the accomplishments of the Estonian Chairmanship 2014-2016 (**Presentation 2**). The Contracting Parties expressed their appreciation to Estonia for an efficient two-year chairmanship and in particular to Mr. Harry Liiv for being an excellent chair.
- The Meeting took note of and welcomed the priorities of the EU Chairmanship of HELCOM starting 1 July 2016 (document 2-1) and took note of the nomination of Ms. Marianne Wenning, Director of ENV C Quality of Life, Water and Air, and Mr. Matjaž Malgaj, Head of Unit ENV C.2 Marine Environment and Water Industry as Chair and Vice-Chair of HELCOM for the period of 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2018.

Next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting

- The Meeting considered potential topics for the next Ministerial Meeting and was of the opinion that the results of HOLAS II will be a major outcome of HELCOM and should provide valuable discussion points for the Ministers, including evaluating the efficiency of measures.
- The Meeting concluded that the year 2018 for the next Ministerial Meeting should be the latest timing and took note that some Contracting Parties would prefer the second half of 2018 due to some other commitments and as updated HOLAS II would be then ready. The Meeting decided to continue the discussion at HOD 51-2016 on the exact timing and to further elaborate on what could be possible concrete outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting.

Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups

- The Meeting took note of the presentation on the progress of the HELCOM Explorer and the preliminary results of assessing the implementation of joint and national actions agreed in the Baltic Sea Action Plan and HELCOM Ministerial Declarations 2010 and 2013 (document 4-25), appreciated this new system, and requested HELCOM Working Groups to consider and make plans for the implementation of the actions not yet accomplished under their area of responsibility at their next meeting.

Maritime Spatial Planning

- The Meeting mandated the MSP Working Group, at its 13th meeting on 24-25 November 2016 (Riga, Latvia), to develop a draft work plan for the future work, utilizing the identified MSP topics (document 4-13-Rev.2), as well as to consider and make proposals on any other related matters as needed, for consideration and approval by HOD 51-2016. The Meeting requested that also the ToR of the group is updated.
- The Meeting considered a suitable period for the extended mandate of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, taking into account the timeframe for implementation of the Regional MSP Roadmap (2013-2020) as well as other requirements the countries need to follow. The Meeting supported the prolongation of the mandate of the MSP WG up to 2021, to be followed by evaluation of the results and decision on further work. The Meeting noted the decision by VASAB to prolong the mandate of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP group by three years and agreed to have the mandate prolonged until 2021 as the first priority.
- The Meeting approved the Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in MSP in the Baltic Sea area as contained in document 4-1 (**Annex 2**). The Meeting took note of the request by Denmark that the issues related to sustainable growth are taken into account when implementing and reviewing the guideline.
- The Meeting approved the Guidelines on transboundary consultations, public participation and co-operation (document 4-2, **Annex 3**) with the clarification that the Guidelines:

- apply without prejudice to obligations emerging from national and international legislation and do not substitute the obligations and existing standard practice of parties to the Espoo Convention and its SEA protocol;
- will be reviewed and amended, if needed, based on the experience gathered;
- refer to the national MSP contact points for the purpose of transboundary consultation and joint planning, as designated by the Baltic Sea countries and listed.

Shipping

- The Meeting approved the final Baltic Sea NOx Emission Control Area application and the related INF. document on NOx reducing technology (documents 4-12-Rev.1 and 4-12-Rev.2) and decided that they will be submitted to the 70th session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (IMO MEPC 70) for consideration.
- The Meeting mandated Finland to make the necessary editorial amendments to the NECA documents (documents 4-12-Rev.1 and 4-12-Rev.2) and to submit them on behalf of the Baltic Sea countries to the MEPC 70 Meeting on 1 July 2016 at the latest, to be considered simultaneously with the NECA submission by the North Sea countries.
- The Meeting took note that the NECA Roadmap will have been completed after the submission of the NECA documents to IMO by 1 July 2016.
- The Meeting welcomed the outcome of MEPC 69 that the Baltic Sea Special Area regulations under MARPOL Annex IV will be applied on or after 1 June 2021 for existing IMO-registered passenger ships (document 4-24). For new passenger ships, the regulations come into effect on or after 1 June 2019. For direct passages between St. Petersburg and the North Sea, there is an extension until 1 June 2023.

State and Conservation

- The Meeting took note of the remaining study reservations on GES boundaries for core indicators (document 4-18). The Meeting noted that Denmark and Germany are still not in a position to lift their remaining study reservations on the GES boundaries, however, are making efforts to clarify their position by State and Conservation 5-2016.
- The Meeting endorsed the use of indicators on commercial fish species developed by ICES in HOLAS II and clarified that all HELCOM countries are involved in reporting data. The Meeting took note of the request by Russia to check the availability of Russian data on fish at ICES.
- The Meeting agreed to the proposed GES boundaries as contained in **Annex 4** pending the following study reservations:
 - a general study reservation by Germany;
 - a study reservation by Poland on the GES boundaries for Cd and Pb in offshore assessment units;
 - a study reservation by Sweden on the use of the proposed GES boundaries for Cd and Pb in offshore assessment units under Descriptor 8;
 - a study reservation by Denmark on proposed GES boundaries that are not environmental quality standards derived from EU directives or nationally agreed environmental quality standards.
- The Meeting recognized the need to reach clarity regarding the use of indicators in HOLAS II and urged the Contracting Parties with study reservations to clarify their position as soon as possible, further noting that the HELCOM Expert network on hazardous substances will convene an online meeting 28 June 2018, 9-12 CET and that this offers a good opportunity to discuss the open issues on these indicators.
- The Meeting took note of the information on HOLAS II recent progress and upcoming activities (document 4-10) and of the planned approval of assessment methodologies for use in HOLAS II at HOD 51-2016.

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- The Meeting supported the continuation of the economic and social analysis in HOLAS II beyond lifetime of TAPAS project so that the developing framework can be further applied within HOLAS II in 2017 and in 2018.

Gear

- The Meeting mandated the Gear Group to oversee the development of the economic and social analyses under the HOLAS II project.
- The Meeting supported to further investigate how a regional consultation on the 2nd Holistic assessment could be arranged and requested the Secretariat to develop a proposal for HOD 51-2016.
- The Meeting noted that the Secretariat is developing a project application, as supported by the Heads of Delegation, in response to the European Commission call for proposals "Implementation of the Second Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: achieving coherent, coordinated and consistent updates of the determinations of Good Environmental Status, initial assessments and environmental targets", in line with initial proposals discussed at GEAR 14-2016 and the objectives of the call.
- The Meeting noted the proposal by the Gear Group to use more often online meetings and to meet as needed.
- The Meeting welcomed the information that Russia can lift their study reservation on the 'Joint documentation on coordination of Programmes of Measures' noting that the EU requirements do not apply to Russia.
- The Meeting discussed possible future HELCOM action on "Blue catch crops / mussel farming and nutrient reduction" as proposed by Estonia, EU and Sweden (document 4-20) and exchanged views on possibilities to include specific activities at the regional level, as part of HELCOM's work.
- The Meeting took note that Germany dissociated itself from the activity "Blue catch crops / mussel farming and nutrient reduction" as possible future HELCOM action, but Germany did not want to get in the way of interested Contracting Parties that wish to exchange information and experience on this form of aquaculture. Germany did not support any approach to Guidelines as being too early. Instead, this delegation proposed to undertake the necessary information exchange in the margins of the Expert Group FISH (CG Aquaculture) with collaboration of WG PRESSURE, and to add two new aspects for consideration: on adverse environment impacts and economic viability.
- The Meeting agreed on the activity with amendments as included in document 4-20-Rev. 2 and that the activity should be considered by relevant working groups.

Pressure

- The Meeting decided to postpone decision on the timeframe for the PLC-8 assessment as 2021 for monitoring and the assessment in 2023.
- The Meeting agreed that the workshop dedicated to MAI/CART assessment methodologies will be organized in February 2017 when the recent assessment results are as ready as possible.
- The Meeting considered the draft HELCOM Recommendation on Sewage Sludge Handling (document 4-5) and took note of study reservations by Germany and Poland as well as by Sweden that further work is needed to ensure regional added value of the Recommendation. The Meeting welcomed that Germany will provide a suggestion for improving the text of the document within three weeks after HOD 50-2016. The Meeting invited Poland to clarify her position as soon as possible.
- The Meeting requested PRESSURE 5-2016 to consider the further elaborated draft of the Recommendation.
- As mandated by HELCOM 37-2016, the Meeting adopted the Recommendation on waterborne pollution input assessment as HELCOM Recommendation 37-38/1 and the Recommendation on monitoring of airborne pollution input as HELCOM Recommendation 37-38/2 (document 4-11, **Annex 5 and 6** respectively).

- The Meeting adopted the draft procedures for releasing the reported PLC water data and accepting the filled-in and consolidated dataset as part of the steps to elaborate PLC products (document 4-6, **Annex 7**).
- The Meeting agreed on the Concept Note for the Seventh Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-7) project, including its objectives, tasks and final products (document 4-14) and requested the Pressure WG to develop the PLC-7 project proposal for consideration by HOD 51-2016.
- The Meeting supported a suggestion by Germany and Finland that the publication of the Status report should be complemented by the annexes containing valuable explanatory information. The annexes should be prepared for publication by the Secretariat taking into account PRESSURE 4-2016 agreements and integrating all the comments received from the Contracting Parties. Then the annexes will be circulated to the Contracting Parties by 8th July for 3 weeks final commenting round. The Meeting also agreed that the annex 1.3 should be withdrawn from the annexes for publication
- The Meeting approved in principle the draft Status report on pharmaceuticals (document 4-17) and its publishing in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings (BSEP).

Response

- The Meeting adopted the revised Terms of Reference for prolongation of the work of the Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response until the end of 2017.
- The Meeting approved the prolongation of the work of the SUBMERGED Expert Group until the end of 2018 with the change that for clarity the Group moves from standing Chairs to topic chairmanship, using the currently identified topic leads (munitions: Germany and Poland, wrecks: Finland) as rotating Chairs.
- The Meeting took note that the SUBMERGED group may during the remaining time focus the work on the two topics, wrecks and munitions, as for the topic of other matters (lost cargo/dumped waste) it seems to be difficult to gather sufficient information from the Contracting Parties.

HELCOM institutional and organisational matters

- The Meeting took note of the information by Chair that following HOD 49-2015 decision, the intersessional exchange of views took place among the Heads of Delegation on the status of HELCOM's streamlining regarding
 - 1) many and bulky meeting documents, 2) how to revitalize the Commission meetings, 3) how to attract high political interest and 4) implementation of HELCOM commitments.
- Regarding the first topic the Chair concluded that progress is being made, for instance, regarding the structure and more timely submission of documents, and that practical ideas for further improvement were proposed.
- Regarding revitalizing Commission meetings the Meeting agreed to have an online meeting for the Heads of Delegation in September 2016 for further discussion and decision on a possible high-level session during the annual meeting of the Commission in 2017 to build the road for the 2018 Ministerial meeting.

Next meeting(s)

- The Meeting agreed that HOD 51-2016 will be held 14-15 December 2016 and HOD 52-2017 tentatively 20-21 June 2017.

HOLAS II 6-2016

Timeline and way forward for the HOLAS II assessments

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the updated timeline for the HOLAS II project (document 3-1, Presentation 1). The Meeting noted that the integrated thematic assessments on biodiversity, eutrophication, hazardous substances and the application of the BSP II approach will be carried out in January-February 2017 and are planned to be evaluated by Contracting Parties through a set of HELCOM workshops tentatively scheduled in March 2017. The first version of the 2nd HELCOM

holistic assessment will be considered for endorsement by State and Conservation 6-2017, tentatively held in second half of May 2016, and for approval at HOD 52 to be held 20-21 June 2017.

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the draft communication plan on the 2nd holistic assessment (Presentation 2). The Meeting recalled the plan to launch a website in advance of the release of the assessment report to build interest, including e.g. news and interviews and initial assessment results, and noted that the website is aimed to be available early 2017. The Meeting noted the invitation to the HOLAS II core team to contribute to the content. The Meeting noted further that a visual identify will be developed as part of the communication plan including e.g. interactive thematic maps, graphs, and fact sheets.
- The Meeting proposed to use a short-intuitive name for the report e.g. 'Baltic Sea State report 2017' while keeping the name 2nd HELCOM holistic assessment as a sub-title.

Development of integrated assessment tools for biodiversity and hazardous substances

- The Meeting took note of the development of the hazardous substances assessment tool under the BalticBOOST project, as presented by the Secretariat and BalticBOOST partner NIVA Denmark, and the recommendations from the [HELCOM workshop BalticBOOST HZ WS 2-2016 \(documents 2-4 and 4-2\)](#).
- The Meeting took note that CHASE 3.0 is currently being updated through the BalticBOOST project based on the guidance provided through the two HELCOM workshops on developing the hazardous substances assessment. In comparison to CHASE 2.0, some main updates are: 1) the bio-effect compartment will be assessed by weighted averaging of the indicators not using chemical score 2) the confidence assessment will be revised so that it is carried out in analogy with the biodiversity (BEAT) and eutrophication (HEAT) assessment tools 3) the tool is coded in R with the aim to integrate the code in a semi-automated assessment system.
- The Meeting took note of the view of Germany not to integrate the bio-effect compartment with other the compartments (concentration in biota, sediment, water) in the integrated assessment of hazardous substances. The Meeting proposed that this issue should be considered when reviewing the results from additional test cases, i.e. when the effect of including the bio-effect compartments can be evaluated, and invited State and Conservation 5-2016 to conclude on the issue when considering the tool for endorsement.
- The Meeting discussed the proposal of the workshop to use the CHASE tool also for the assessment of coastal waters. This proposal is based on the view of the workshop that WFD assessments are not comparable between countries (see HELCOM BalticBOOST HZ WS 2-2016, document 2) while the CHASE tool will support a coherent assessment of coastal waters as well as a coherent assessment between coastal and offshore waters in HOLAS II. The Meeting was of the view that such decision will require additional test cases on the use of the CHASE tool compared with WFD assessment results in coastal waters.
- The Meeting noted that in the preparation for State and Conservation 5-2016, which is to endorse the tool, additional test cases based on Danish, German, Lithuanian and Polish data will be carried out by the lead partner NIVA Denmark to support the decision. Finland, Latvia, Poland furthermore agreed to submit the requested WFD assessment results, preferably as shapefiles, to complete the compilation of WFD assessment results in coastal waters.
- The Meeting noted that when thematic assessment results are available for the coastal and offshore areas it will be timely for the HOLAS II core team to consider how the results are to be presented, e.g. presenting WFD and CHASE integrated results in the same or in separate maps.
- The Meeting recognized that the substances used will differ between different assessment units depending on the monitoring by Contracting Parties and supported the recommendation from the workshop that the substances included in the integration should be clearly indicated for each assessment unit in the presentation of results.

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- The Meeting further recalled that a data arrangement for hazardous substances is being developed under the BalticBOOST project by the project partner ICES with a similar structure as already developed for HELCOM eutrophication assessment system through a HELCOM workspace.
 - The Meeting took note of the presentation by Henrik Nygård, representative of BalticBOOST partner SYKE, Finland, on the development of the biodiversity assessment tool (BEAT 3.0) and the recommendations from the workshop [HELCOM BalticBOOST Biodiv WS 2-2016 \(documents 2-5 and 4-1, Presentation 3\)](#).
 - The Meeting supported the recommendation from the workshop to use weighted averaging as a default integration approach, at least to the level of ecosystem components, taking note that the position in Germany is not set yet.
 - The Meeting did not support the proposal of the workshop to complement the weighted averaging approach with presentation of the “worst case scenario” based on the OOA approach at all levels, as it was not clear how such assessment results would be used or interpreted. The Meeting noted that the underlying information for the ‘worst case scenario’ is readily available at all assessment levels through the results of the individual indicator evaluations.
 - The Meeting proposed to continue the integration all the way to the level of biodiversity making use of the OOA approach between elements to arrive at the status of biodiversity, as this was conceived as more transparent and technically more robust, taking note that the position of Denmark and Poland on this issue is not yet set.
 - The Meeting underlined that the presentation of the status of biodiversity should also provide information on the status of elements and that this should be considered in the development of visualization of results.
 - The Meeting supported the recommendation from the workshop to make use of relevant HELCOM core indicators on eutrophication also in the biodiversity assessment as well as biological WFD indicators to increase the representation of indicators reflecting the condition of habitats.
 - The Meeting discussed the proposal on how to assess confidence in the assessment, and requested the BalticBOOST project to develop the proposal further and present the results to State and Conservation 5-2016.
 - The Meeting stressed the importance for Contracting Parties to clarify the national position on the structure of the biodiversity and hazardous substance assessment tools in advance of State and Conservation 5-2016.
 - The Meeting took note of the view from Sweden not to use the terms GES/sub-GES as long as it is not defined in the Commission Decision on GES if GES/sub-GES can be defined at regional level.

Economic and social analyses

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the proposal for a framework for the socioeconomic analyses in HOLAS II (**document 5-1, Presentation 5**).
- The Meeting discussed the data needed to expand the case studies on the use of marine waters to other countries than Estonia and Finland.
- The Meeting discussed the confidence in the cost of degradation analyses and proposed that it should be explored if confidence assessment in the cost of degradation analysis could apply a similar approach as used for evaluating confidence in the assessment in the integrated status assessment tools (BEAT, HEAT, i.e. based on categories).
- The Meeting agreed to aim for integrating the ESA results in the chapters of status and pressures on the marine environment of the summary report. If this way of presentation is not seen as appropriate when a fuller view of available results is evident, considering the need to give the results good visibility, a second option would be to give this information as a separate chapter. In the case no further external

funding is available for continued ESA analysis in 2017, the TAPAS project report will be available as a source of reference.

- The Meeting took note of the roadmap for further regional socioeconomic analyses beyond the TAPAS project as requested by HOLAS II 5-2016 (**document 5-2, Presentation 6**) and presented by the TAPAS project partner SYKE, Finland.
- The Meeting discussed the proposed future activities of the roadmap, supported in general the continued future work of the ESA network, and noted that the activities beyond the TAPAS project and formalization of the ESA network will be further discussed by Gear Group.

Assessment of pressures including the development of the Baltic Sea impact index

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the update on spatial ecosystem components data to be used in the Baltic Sea Impact Index undertaken through the TAPAS project (**document 6-1, Presentation 7**).
- The Meeting recalled that the Baltic Sea impact index should as far as possible reflect the time period 2011-2016 and was of the view that the index should not reflect historic aspects, whereas these should be included in other sections of the HOLAS II report. The meeting furthermore recommended that predicted distribution maps should only be used in the case where no other data is available.
- The Meeting supported the continued use of the Natura 2000 habitats maps in the BSII as the exclusion of the Natura 2000 habitats from the BSII would result in the omission of ecologically important areas not covered by other ecosystem components, e.g. offshore sandbanks and reefs, submarine structures made by leaking gas and many shallow coastal bays.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the proposed process to review and verify spatial datasets (**document 6-3, Presentation 9**).
- The Meeting agreed that the request on the approval process should be primarily addressed to the HOLAS II core team in copy to the Pressure and State and Conservation Working Groups.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by Samuli Korpinen, representative of TAPAS partner SYKE, on the development of the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impact Index (**document 6-4, Presentation 10**) and the recommendations from the second HELCOM TAPAS workshop on the BSPII (TAPAS Pressure Index WS 2-2016).
- The Meeting concluded that using CHASE assessment results calculated per assessment unit as input data in the BSII assessment is the currently best available option. The Meeting noted that as many of the measurements are taken from biota (e.g. herring) they represent a wider area than the sampling station and thus results per assessment units can be considered representative.
- The Meeting supported the proposal that for nutrients the relevant layer to include in BSII would be nutrient concentration layers (nitrogen and phosphorous) as a proxy for input. The Meeting noted that the core indicators are assessed per assessment units, and that for the purposes of the index calculation an integrated map based on station data would be preferable. The Meeting requested the TAPAS project to explore the use of the same data as for the HELCOM core indicators on nutrients in communication with EUTRO-OPER EXTENDED.
- The Meeting agreed that information on input of nutrients by sub-basins provided by PLC-6 project in early 2017 will not be used in the BSII, however the information will be presented elsewhere in the HOLAS II report.
- The Meeting noted that the TAPAS project is still developing the approach for estimating confidence, noting that the aim is to evaluate the confidence and data quality of each spatial pressure dataset and that an approach describing confidence based on three classes could be used for estimating confidence in data layers and in the sensitivity scores, whereas the overarching assessment of confidence in the BSII results could be descriptive. The meeting supported the proposed method to assess confidence in sensitivity scores obtained from literature.

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- The Meeting agreed on the advice from the workshop to use the LiACAT tool as far as possible for synthesizing the literature- and survey results, and that if the tool is not available then the results will be synthesized in other format in accordance with agreed criteria.
 - The Meeting took note of the presentation Finland on the proposal for how to assess hydrographical conditions (Descriptor 7) (**Presentation 11**).
 - The Meeting noted the current proposal is to use a risk based decision tree in order to arrive at a GES assessment, and noted the view of Finland that this approach is not suited to assess descriptor 7 if the draft Commission Decision on GES is adopted.
 - The Meeting took note of the proposal of the drafting group to focus on the potential of effects leading to permanent loss of hydrological conditions (**Presentation 12**).
 - The Meeting agreed on the proposed approach as a way of providing information on areas where potential problems may occur, and noted that it may not be possible to assign sensitivity scores for the habitats to the different types of constructions or cumulative effects within HOLAS II and that the assessment could be considered as a first step towards assessing descriptor 7. It should be avoided that the D7 preliminary assessment unnecessarily problematizes any environmental pressures.
 - The Meeting invited the TAPAS project and national experts to identify the list of BSPII datasets that are relevant, carry out the proposed preliminary assessment and prepare a method description describing the sensitivity values applied for the habitats. The HOLAS II core group agreed to be the contact point for the TAPAS project for carrying out the approach.

Update on HELCOM activities feeding into HOLAS II

- The Meeting took note of the presentation of the eutrophication thematic assessment as presented by the Chair of the HELCOM Intersessional Network on Eutrophication, Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Finland (**Presentation 13**).
- The Meeting took note that the HEAT aggregation is currently structure around the draft Commission Decision on GES version 4 that was available in June, and noted that it would be possible to adjust the aggregation in accordance with the final version of the decision if it is adopted in November. The Meeting discussed the possible need to use one-out-all-out between the indicators and noted that also this change in the aggregation is also technically possible.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the upcoming HELCOM Maritime Assessment and recent activities in the field in HELCOM (**Presentation 14**).
- The Meeting took note of the timeline of publishing the maritime assessment by March 2017, noting that some delays have been identified for example in reporting data on dumped hazardous materials.
- The Meeting clarified that the same pressure and human activity datasets are used both in the Maritime assessment and in the work of the TAPAS project on BSPII. It was further clarified that the Maritime assessment will focus on the activities and spatial distribution of the activity, and for example not go into as many details in fishery catches as will be included in HOLAS II.

Outline and content of the HOLAS II report

- The Meeting discussed the data products and key graphic outputs from the project and followed-up on the development of a visual identity and web design for the HOLAS II outputs.
- The Meeting took note of the draft outline for the HOLAS II report as presented by the Secretariat (**Presentation 16**) and included in **Annex 2**.
- The Meeting recommended that a professional on scientific communication is connected to the writing process and recognized that including a person who has a fresh eye on the material could be a preferable way forward to identify key messages and produce a summary with conclusions based on the large

amount of available assessment results. The Meeting thanked Finland, Germany and Sweden for expressing willingness to explore possibilities to supporting this work.

- The Meeting discussed the inclusion of the chapter of measures in the report and concluded that it would be relevant to include information on measures that are already implemented and describe what measures could be taken to improve the status of the environment, noting that it is important to agree on a suitable format for presentation of such information from the regional perspective.
- The Meeting agreed to emphasize and extend the 'conclusions and future outlook' chapter of the report, giving a holistic and integrated perspective of the assessment and telling stories of the status of the Baltic Sea. The meeting took note of the proposal to give the 'conclusion' chapter could look different than the other chapters and be developed with the aim to serve as an entry point into the assessment in the online presentation of the report also for a general public.
- The Meeting agreed that the HOLAS II core team will be involved in the intersessional further planning of the preparation of the HOLAS II material, including the setting up of a writing team for the summary report which will consist of members of HOLAS Core Group, Secretariat and a professional in scientific communication, and planning the structure of the thematic assessments.
- The Meeting agreed that the writing team will be tasked with drafting the first version of the HOLAS II summary report ('Level 1') in accordance with the outline and work with experts to fill in the content, including as relevant HELCOM expert groups/networks/projects, to start drafting the thematic assessments ('Level 2').

Any other business

- The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting of HOLAS II 7-2017 on 4-6 April 2017.
- The Meeting agreed that an online meeting of HOLAS II core team would be held in the afternoon 19 January to follow up on the outcome of State and Conservation 5-2016, HOD 51-2016 and the MSFD Committee in November.

PRESSURE 5-2016

Marine litter

- The Meeting discussed the progress in implementation of the RAP ML. The Meeting approved the updated table to follow up implementation (Annex 3 of doc. 3-3). The Meeting noted that there are still problems for the Contracting Parties to take a lead even in small actions.
- The Meeting considered the need to update HELCOM Recommendations 23/5 "Reduction of discharges from urban areas by the proper management of storm water systems" and 18/4 "Managing wetlands and freshwater ecosystems for retention of nutrients", respectively, addressing stormwater management systems and use of wetlands, with a view to promote BAT/BEP and application of ensure synergistic and cost-efficient solutions. The Meeting also considered a potential revision of HELCOM Recommendations 28E/5 "Reduction of discharges from urban areas by the proper management of storm water systems".
- The Meeting invited the HELCOM EN-Marine Litter to investigate the possibilities to update the Recommendations and come up with the concrete suggestions and timeline. The Meeting decided to include a possibility to revise the Recommendations into the Work Plan of the Pressure group.

Underwater noise

- The Meeting welcomed the progress of the indicators work and supported to shift the status of the indicator 'Distribution in time and space of loud low- and mid-frequency impulsive sounds' to pre-core indicator.

- The Meeting further considered the proposed indicator concept for continuous sound presented in document 4-4-Rev.1 and the proposed assessment protocol.
- The Meeting took note of the position of Denmark that the assessment protocol follows a very precautionary approach, since the first step of the assessment proposed also applies to areas where no sensitive species are present.
- The Meeting agreed that the formulation should be fine-tuned at STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 to clarify that this first step only applies to areas where sensitive species are present. The Meeting also agreed that national Pressure group experts will contact experts in the State&Conservation group to elaborate a consolidated position.
- The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the HELCOM BalticBOOST Workshop on Underwater Noise, held on 5-6 October 2016 (doc. 4-7).
- Based on the Outcome of the Workshop, the Meeting:
 - considered the recommended principles for establishing good environmental status (GES) for impulsive and continuous noise (Annex 5 and Annex 6 of the Outcome, respectively) noting that in the future they may need to be amended based on new knowledge;
 - supported improvement of the regional registry of impulsive events.
- The Meeting took note of the study reservation by Russia and invited Russia to lift the study reservation within two weeks (**by 11 November**).
- The Meeting took note of the Danish position that, since the draft Commission decision on GES assessment under MFSD state that the threshold values and threshold levels should be agreed upon at union level, Denmark is of the opinion that final decision on GES principles and threshold values should be consolidated at EU-levels in accordance to the draft Commission decision. Therefore, Denmark is not in the position to support the presented GES principles at the moment and makes a study reservation on Annex 5 of doc. 4-7.
- The Meeting took note that Germany cannot agree with principle one in Annex V of the document with regard to harbour porpoises. The Meeting agreed that a new proposal for this specific principle will be circulated via the HELCOM EN Noise and delivered to the upcoming GEAR meeting for consideration.
- The Meeting agreed that the suggested principles [for establishing good environmental status (GES) for impulsive and continuous noise (Annex 5 and Annex 6 of the Outcome, respectively)] are a fruitful way forward and that the discussion regarding consistency of principles for defining GES in EU, OSPAR and HELCOM areas should be continued at GEAR group. The Meeting also agreed to include the corresponding item into the ToR for HELCOM EN-Noise.
- The Meeting agreed to support national testing of the recommended decision-support trees for ambient and impulsive noise (Annex 3 and Annex 4 of doc. 4-7) and tasked the HELCOM EN-Noise to further develop them according to the conclusions from the workshop, taking into account a two week's study reservation (**by 11 November 2016**) by Russia.
- The Meeting also took note that Denmark can support the “decision-support trees” are developed further with the understanding that this is a working process and that it will be a possibility for the Contracting Parties to evaluate the final approach.
- The Meeting welcomed the election of Mr. Peter Sigra, Sweden, as Chair for the HELCOM Expert Network for Underwater Noise.

Dredging/depositing operations and mining on the sea floor

- The Meeting supported in general the suggested updates [to the HELCOM reporting format on dredged material (doc. 5-1 and 5-1-Att.1)] and agreed on the submission of updates to the “HELCOM Guidelines on sustainable handling of dredged material” to HOD 51-2016 for endorsement and to further use for annual reporting round in 2017 and onwards.
- The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat will circulate the updated format to the Contracting Parties not later than 31 November for *tacit approval* by **4 November 2016**.

- The Meeting took note of the suggestion by the expert group on dredged material regarding a procedure to verify reported data on dredged material (doc. 5-2) and agreed that the procedure to report annual data as well as their verification and approval by the national expert should be automated.
- The Meeting considered document 5-5, Draft methodology for assessment of impact by dredging/depositing operations, presented by the Secretariat and agreed to use it for the purposes of the HOLAS II assessment and further assessments based on annually reported data. The Meeting highlighted that the methodology could be utilized by HOLAS II for the calculation of the Baltic Sea pressure index and Baltic Sea impact index.
- The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat will make a first assessment based on the methodology and that the methodology might be updated after expert consideration.
- The Meeting considered the suggestion on the structure of the Regional status report on exploitation of mineral resources on the sea floor (doc. 5-3) and agreed on its contents.
- The Meeting discussed the use of the information on exploitation of mineral resources on the sea floor and agreed that the information is quite relevant to support MSFD reporting for the EU member states and HOLAS II assessment, as well as to contribute to the economic and social assessment and to be utilized for maritime spatial planning.
- The Meeting agreed to initiate the process to compile information and prepare the regional Status report on exploitation of mineral resources on the sea floor in accordance with the suggested structure, but noted also that some data might have confidential character.

Draft HELCOM Recommendation on sewage sludge handling

- The Meeting agreed to submit the draft Recommendation [(doc. 6-1-Rev.1.)] to HELCOM HOD 51-2016 for further consideration and approval.
- The Meeting took note of the study reservation by Germany on the new text and that Germany will strive to lift it before HELCOM HOD 51-2016.

Hazardous substances

Collecting information on hazardous substances to identify HELCOM priorities

- Data Consultant MSC-E presented a draft report on the atmospheric supply of cadmium, mercury, BaP and PBDE to the Baltic Sea in the period 1990-2014 (doc.7-3 and fact sheets 7-3_atts 1-4).
- The Meeting discussed the results of the assessment and decided on the substances for the assessment in 2017: Cd, Pb, Hg and dioxins. The Meeting welcomed the offer by EMEP to provide a short overview of the potential airborne input of PFOS as an additional information to the annual contract.
- The Meeting took note of the reservation by Denmark, Germany and Poland on publication of the BSEFs and the report for more thorough consideration of the documents. The reservation will be lifted and comments on the fact sheet reports will be provided to MSC-E **by 11 November 2016**.
- The Meeting endorsed the fact sheets and technical report for publication on the EMEP and HELCOM websites, pending the reservations.

Pharmaceuticals

- The Meeting endorsed the Draft ToR for the Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals (HELCOM CG PHARMA) as contained in **Annex 3** to this Outcome, to be submitted to HOD 51-2016 for approval.
- The Meeting agreed that the next practical step to collect information on waterborne input of POPs is a questionnaire focused on the three identified substances (nonyl phenol, octyl phenol, PFAS) of major concern; to collect information on the character of the available data and their usability for mapping of a potential input of these substances into the aquatic environment in the region.

- The Meeting agreed that the questionnaire will be prepared by Sweden in cooperation with PA Hazards and with assistance by the Secretariat. The questionnaire will be circulated to the Contracting Parties by the end of January 2017 with an intention to report the preliminary results to PRESSURE 6-2017.

Micropollutants in effluents from WWTPs

- The Meeting agreed on the next practical steps and the timeframe:
 - Step 1: Compilation and assessment of available information and data on micropollutants of concern for Contracting Parties in the Baltic Sea – during 2016 (PRESSURE)
 - Step 2: Compile information from Contracting Parties on treatment techniques and experiences – during 2016/7
 - Step 3: Summary report on advanced treatment techniques, including consideration of feasibility, costs, good practice and management options – during 2017.
- The Meeting considered the results of the section of the questionnaire dedicated to micropollutants (doc. 7-1), agreed on the substances of “high concern”.
- The Meeting agreed that the questionnaire will be prepared by Sweden in cooperation with the Secretariat and that the questionnaire might include also information on available information on the WWT technologies applied in the different countries, as well as the possibility to indicate the further micropollutants of high concern. The questionnaire will be circulated to the Contracting Parties by the end of January 2017 with an intention to report the preliminary results to PRESSURE 6-2017.

Pollution Load Compilation

- The Meeting took note of the annual EMEP report Atmospheric supply of nitrogen to the Baltic Sea in the period 1990-2014 (doc. 8-4 and 8-4_atts 1-2). The Draft EMEP report for HELCOM is available on the EMEP web page: http://emep.int/mscw/mscw_publications.html.
- The Meeting invited all Contracting Parties to address their comments to the MSC-W, with a copy to the Secretariat (dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi) by **11 November 2016**.

Methodologies for PLC-6 assessment

The Meeting took note of the progress of the Sixth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-6) project and the upcoming deadlines for the data reporting and information on PLC-6 product releases (doc. 8-9).

The Meeting considered the methodology and provided feedback on the accounting for extra reductions to follow up CART assessment (doc. 8-3).

The Meeting agreed that the methodology will be used for a trial calculation in the PLC-6 assessment.

MAI/CART Workshop

- The Meeting took note of the agenda of the workshop on MAI/CART prepared by the RedCore DG and invited all Contracting Parties to ensure the attendance by relevant participants representing different target groups and stakeholders in the workshop.
- The Meeting also agreed that the workshop will be held on 6-7 March 2017.

PLC-7 Project proposal

- The Meeting took note of and welcomed the PLC-7 project proposal based on the concept note agreed by the HOD 50-2016 and exchanged views on the project structure, deliverables and timeline.
- The Meeting proposed Lars M. Svendsen at DCE to act as the PLC-7 project manager.
- The Meeting invited the Secretariat to circulate the letter with the project proposal updated in accordance with the recommendation of the Meeting and the table with suggested timeline and man/month by 4 November 2016, with the invitation to identify leadership of the particular products of

the project. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to respond the letter identifying a potential leadership of the particular products by 19 November 2016.

Internal loading of phosphorus in the Baltic Sea

- The Meeting took note of the information presented on the joint position of environmental NGOs - CCB and WWF, on internal loading in the Baltic Sea (doc. 8-6) pointing at the necessary focus to be put at causes of eutrophication, as external loading of phosphorus reductions before entering the sea.
- The Meeting pointed out that the internal load has been already taken into account in the calculation of maximum allowable input.
- The Meeting also pointed out the continued importance of implementation of measures to reduce external loading with the understanding that achievement of the GES is a long process. The Meeting also was of the opinion that the methods and technologies aiming at reduction of internal load should not be implemented without an appropriate impact assessment.
- The Meeting also pointed out that the measures to manage internal load should not be excluded from consideration and supported further research activities to create a knowledge base, highlighting that the research should also take into account a potential adverse effect of measures. The Meeting also noted a view of Germany that there is no need to apply measures to reduce internal phosphorus loads for the Baltic Sea to achieve GES.
- The Meeting took note of a call from both PA Nutri and PA Hazards for better national consultation and more active involvement of national representatives in the work of the policy areas, particularly in evaluation of project proposals.
- Germany brought to the attention of the Meeting two project proposals on measures to reduce internal loads and the Meeting requested the opportunity to comment on those until 4 November 2016.
- The Meeting requested the Maritime group to provide information regarding the input of nutrients and hazardous substances with cargo ships, particularly concerning the above mentioned cleaning of cargo holds.
- The Meeting invited RedCore DG to investigate the issue and invited the Contracting Parties to share the information with the national experts participating the RedCore DG. The work should be done in cooperation with the Maritime group, particularly in the part related to the operations at sea.
- The Meeting was of the opinion that fish farming may have a significant local effect, especially in the areas with low nutrient load. Some Contracting Parties also pointed out to the Ministerial Declaration 2013, where the Contracting Parties have committed to implement nutrient reductions to improve environmental status even if no reduction requirements were established for certain basins.

Follow-up of HELCOM Recommendations: implementation, reporting and revision

- The Meeting considered the parts relevant to Pressure group of the implementation status of the ministerial commitments and other information included in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan follow-up (doc. 9-1), and agreed to include items 8 and 10 into the Work Plan and discuss the perspective to implement the commitments.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair(s)

- The Meeting re-elected Mr Lars Sonesten, Sweden, as the Chair of Pressure Group for the next two-year period (2017-2019).
- The Meeting postponed the election of Vice-Chair(s) to the next meeting of the Group.

Future work and Meeting

- The Meeting updated the Work Plan [for Pressure Group for 2017-2018] as contained in **Annex 5**.

- The Meeting welcomed the preliminary invitation of Russia to host the next meeting of Pressure Group (PRESSURE 6-2017) in St. Petersburg on [25-27] April 2017.
- The Seventh Meeting of the Group (PRESSURE 7-2017) will be held during week 43/2017 and the Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to consider hosting of the meeting on 23-27 October 2017.