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Background

According to strategic plan for the update of the BSAP and the decision by HOD 55-2018, Working Groups have initiated a review of the existing HELCOM ecological and management objectives and the development of new objectives for marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance to the seabed. Concomitantly HOD have reviewed the overarching 'BSAP structure', including its segments and goals, and agreed on a provisional structure to be used as a basis for the update of the BSAP and ongoing work by the Working Groups (para 2.23, Outcome HOD 56-2019).

The review of existing objectives and the development of new ones is taking place through an iterate process where the review has been initiated by one Working Group, while other Groups have had the possibility to comment the proposals of relevance for the mandate of their work.

This document includes information on the proposed update of the 'BSAP structure' (section 1) as of HOD 56-2019 and a summary of the most up to date proposals on objectives by Working Groups (Annex 1). The aim is to finalize an updated set of objectives through autumn meetings of HELCOM Working Groups in 2019 so that HOD 57-2019 can agree upon them.

Note that the objectives will be further worked on by upcoming meetings of State and Conservation 11-2019, Pressure 11-2019, and HELCOM VASAB MSP 19-2019, which take place shortly before GEAR 21-2019. A revised document will be submitted to GEAR after closure of these meetings. Detailed information on how the Groups have arrived at the proposed objectives as in Annex 1 can be found in [document 8J-7 to State and Conservation 11-2019](#).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the provisional agreement to adjust the BSAP structure and the ongoing review and revision of HELCOM objectives.
- take note that an updated document with requests to the GEAR meeting will be submitted at a later stage.

1) Background to the adjustment of the Baltic Sea Action Plan

1.1 Adjustment to the BSAP structure

As part of the BSAP update process, HOD 55-2018 requested HELCOM Working Groups to initiate the development of ecological objectives for the topics marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance of the seabed and to review existing HELCOM objectives based on guidance given by the GEAR Group. Management objectives, which currently only exists for the BSAP segment on maritime activities, should be developed for all segments of the updated BSAP. HOD 56-2019 furthermore agreed to use ecological objectives, management objectives and actions to organize the segments of the updated BSAP document (Outcome, para 2.23). The association between the three components is illustrated in Figure 1.

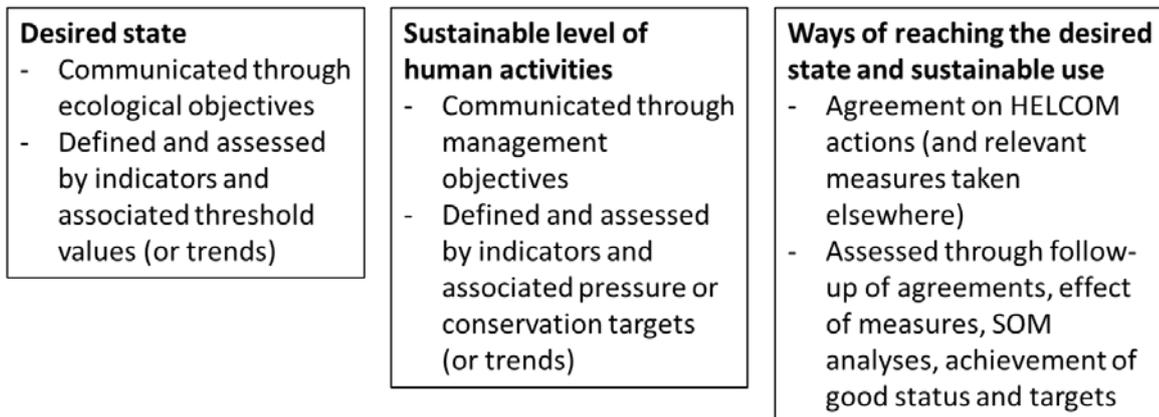


Figure 1. Link and purpose of HELCOM ecological objectives, management objectives and actions.

Once the revised and updated objectives have been agreed upon the continued development of the updated BSAP will be organized according to this framework.

HOD 56-2019 also supported an adjustment to the BSAP structure to better reflect the topics that are currently addressed in HELCOM. The structure follows closely the existing BSAP, maintaining four segments, with the following adjustments (Figure 2):

- to address litter primarily under the segment on hazardous substances and to consider changing the segment and associated goal to ‘Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and litter’.
- to include under the maritime segment a broader set of sea-based activities and consider changing the name of the segment and associated strategic goal to ‘Environmentally friendly sea-based activities’. The new topics underwater noise and loss and disturbance of the seabed are primarily assigned to this segment.
- the segments and goals on Eutrophication and Biodiversity remain as present while the associated activities and actions may be adjusted as relevant.
- the segments on Eutrophication and Hazardous substances and litter will, as in the current BSAP, primarily focus on pressures from land-based activities.

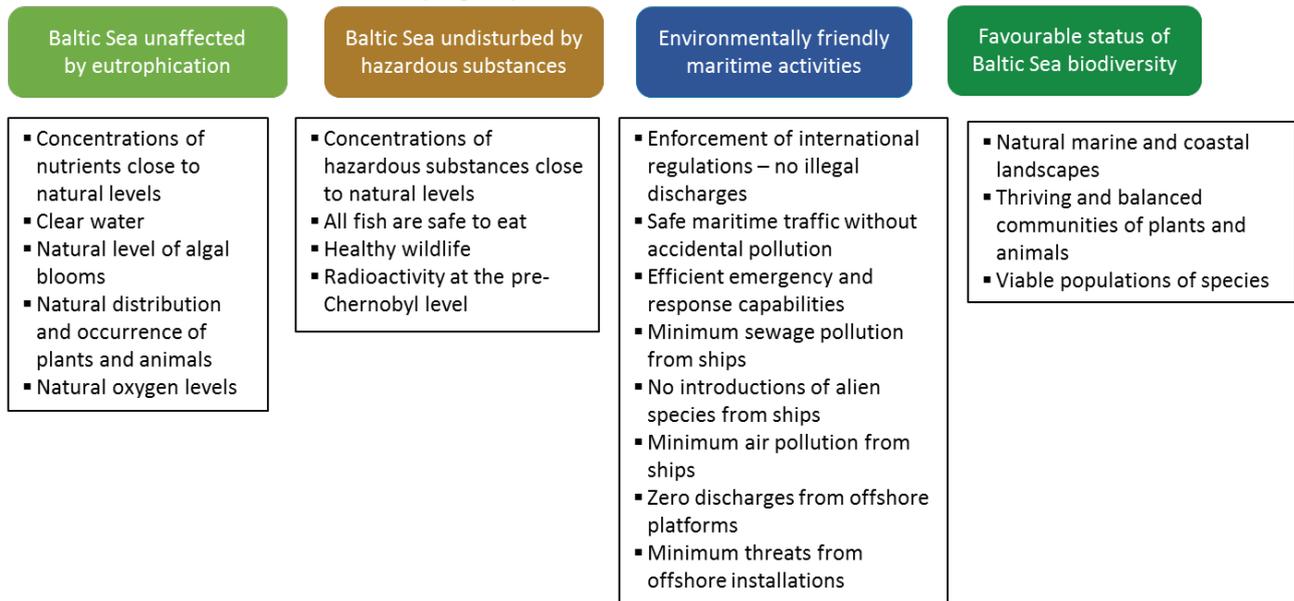
Maritime 19-2019 furthermore proposed to change the goal of the sea-based segment by exchanging the word ‘friendly’ with ‘sustainable’. This proposal will be presented for consideration by HOD 57-2019.

It should be noted that the ‘BSAP structure’ is not directly linked to the HELCOM Working Group structure and that several Working Groups will be involved in the future implementation of actions under each segment in the updated BSAP.

VISION (HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will be maintained):

A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities

SEGMENTS, GOALS and OBJECTIVES (original):



SEGMENT and GOALS (as HOD 56-2019):

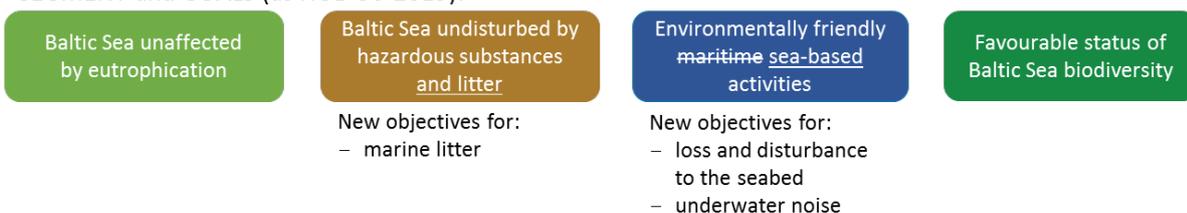


Figure 2. The upper part of the figure shows the current HELCOM system with a vision, strategic goals, ecological objectives (eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity) or management objectives (maritime activities). All existing objectives are to be reviewed by HELCOM Working Groups and new objectives are to be developed for marine litter, loss and disturbance to the seabed, and underwater noise. The lower part of the figure shows adjustments to the overarching goals as of HOD 56-2019.

1.2 Process for review of existing objectives and development of new objectives

The review of existing objectives and development of new objectives is carried out through an iterative process where one Working Group has initiated the review, while other Groups will have the possibility to comment the proposals of relevance for the mandate of their work. The aim is to present proposals for endorsement by HOD in December 2019. The following meetings have addressed the objectives so far:

- Pressure 10-2019:
- State & Conservation 10-2019:
- Fish 10-2019:
- Response 26-2019:
- Maritime 19-2019:

The outcome of the discussions at these meetings is presented in Working Papers ([Pressure 10-2019, DS WP.1](#), [State&Conservation 10-2019, 8J, WP.1 – Attachment 1](#)) or as part of the main outcome of the meetings ([Outcome Fish 10-2019 para 3.22](#), [Response 26-2019 para 3.10](#), [Maritime 19-2019](#)). The objectives will be discussed again with the view to come to an agreement on open issues by State and Conservation 11-2019, Pressure 11-2019 and HELCOM VASAB-MSP 19-2019.

1.3 Guidance given for the review and revision of HELCOM objectives

The guidance given for the review and revision of HELCOM objectives is based on the outcome of GEAR 19-2018, GEAR 20-2019, and further elaborations by the Chairs of Pressure, State and Conservation and the Secretariat.

General guidance

The objectives should be:

- linked to HELCOM assessments i.e. achievement should be possible to follow-up through HELCOM assessments,
- easy to communicate to the wider community,
- not too many. Recall that the BSAP structure is meant to reflect overall aim and objectives of HELCOM work to the wider community, but not to list every issue dealt with.
- with regard to the review of existing objectives the following should also be considered:
 - o are objectives missing with respect to new developments in HELCOM since the current BSAP was adopted?
 - o are the objectives up to date (e.g. are the terms used up to date)?
- the terminology of objectives between segments should be harmonized.

Ecological objectives

- should reflect the desired state of the environment and be of aspirational character,
- should be possible to follow-up by use of indicators and associated threshold values,
- with regard to new topics (marine litter, underwater noise, loss and disturbance to seabed) the ecological objectives should focus on the state elements of these topics or on their impacts on the environment e.g. on the concentration, amounts or extent of litter/noise/disturbance to seabeds, or properties of the ecosystem that should be maintained or not harmed.

Management objectives

- management objectives describe the desired effect of or aspirational targets of management measures, (see e.g. management objectives for existing segment on maritime activities)
- follow-up of management objectives should in principle be done using indicators and associated pressure targets or in the case of biodiversity by targets for conservation and protection.

GEAR 20-2019 also made the following reflections on the proposals for objectives presented to that meeting:

- the proposed objectives for biodiversity are being developed in the right direction however should consider the difference between habitats, communities and population since there are now overlaps between the proposed objectives;
- for the proposed objective on 'Ecosystem function and development'; consider using the word succession instead of development;
- when further elaborating on the objectives it should be recalled that they should be easy to communicate;
- align the development of ecological objectives with other ongoing HELCOM work, e.g. development of indicators;
- harmonize the terminology between objectives of different segments;
- with regard to management objectives for litter that refers to products etc., remove the word "marine" since the litter is not marine until it enters the sea;
- the term 'Wild-life' as proposed in relation to hazardous substances, litter and noise; consider a term that also embraces biodiversity more generally;
- with regard to noise, consider limiting the objective to underwater noise;

- clarify the link to MSFD descriptors, noting that this can take place at a later stage when the objectives are more developed;
- take note of and check against objectives that are currently developed by OSPAR.

These reflections have been brought forward to Working Group Meetings as relevant.

1.4 A reflection on harmonization of objectives between segments

This section provides a reflection of the degree of revisions proposed by the Working Groups and the level of harmonization with regard use of terminology between segments. For an overview of the objectives across segments see Annex 1.

Ecological objectives

Regarding the level of revision, for the existing ecological objectives for eutrophication and hazardous substances the Pressure and State and Conservation Workings Groups have proposed only minor revisions since they are considered as still relevant and because it is found valuable to keep BSAP objectives that have become well-known to the wider community.

For the biodiversity segment the State and Conservation Working Group has proposed more substantial changes to increase the relevance of the objectives. These revisions are found necessary to ensure that the objectives cover the range from species to ecosystem and that the objectives reflect the current HELCOM indicator system as far as possible.

The use of terms of the proposed objectives is fairly well aligned across segments for example referring to 'natural' conditions or 'concentrations' in three of the segments, and using use of the term 'wild-life' in two of them (although note the proposals to revise this term to 'marine life' to be consider by State and Conservation 11-2019). The length of the objectives however vary considerably; from 2-19 words.

The number of objectives associated to the segments and goals differs which is also the case in the current BSAP. With regard to the ecological objectives they now vary between 2-5. The lowest number of objectives is linked to the segment on sea-based activities where ecological objectives related to underwater noise and loss and disturbance to the seabed are proposed to be placed according to HOD 56-2019. Many of the ecological objectives for other segments are also relevant for sea-based activities and instead of repeating them, cross-referencing will be used e.g. by clarifying that the objectives under the sea-based segment need to be achieved to reach a Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication.

Management objectives/Conservation objectives

Management objectives currently only exists for maritime activities. With regard to these objectives Maritime 19-2019 proposed minor revisions to four of the objectives (see section 2.4.3). The previous objective related to input of sewage was revised and is now using the wordings eutrophication and 'operational pollution', thereby increasing the consistency with other segments regarding use of terms.

For eutrophication, hazardous substance and litter, and sea-based activities there are still several alternatives proposed for the management objectives, but the alternatives follow a similar line of thinking:

- to have one overarching objective that covers input from human activities in general, **OR**,
- to formulate one or a few objectives that pinpoints those activities that are contributing the most to the pressure in the Baltic Sea

The terms used are fairly well aligned between segments including the use of expressions like 'minimize the input of' or 'sustainable use of' pending on the segment and pressure in questions. Further tweaking of words could take place once a decision has been made on which of the alternative management objectives to include. The conservation objectives for the biodiversity segment are inherently different from the other segments.

Compared with management objectives for eutrophication the objectives for hazardous substances and litter deviates somewhat in that some of them are directed towards e.g. use and production. This difference between management objectives can be justified due to the fact that hazardous substance and litter are, in most cases, man-made products.

Currently the list of proposed management objectives is the longest for the sea-based segment. This may be warranted due to the many activities that are considered under this segment and that they are difficult to group due to different type of impact.

Annex 1. Current proposals aligned by ecological objectives and management objectives.

Goals	Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication	Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and litter	Environmentally sustainable ¹ sea-based activities	Status of biodiversity which ensures resilience and ecological integrity ²
Ecological objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels - [Clear water³] - Natural level of algal blooms - Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals - Natural oxygen levels 	<p>Hazardous substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concentrations of hazardous substances close to natural levels - All seafood safe to eat - Healthy wildlife and food webs - Radioactivity at negligible risk level to humans and environment <p>Litter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wild-life safeguarded from marine litter, OR - No harm to wildlife from marine litter 	<p>Loss and disturbance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthy seabed habitats OR - Maintaining natural seabed conditions OR - Undisturbed seabed from human activities OR - Size and distribution of habitats are within limits which secure long term variability for associated communities and ecosystem services <p>Noise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No harm to wildlife from anthropogenic noise, OR - Introduction of sound does not harm wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viable populations of all species - Natural distribution, occurrence and quality of habitats and associated communities - Functional and resilient food webs
Management/conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimize input of nutrients from human activities OR, - Minimize input of nutrients from agriculture and... 	<p>Hazardous substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replacement of hazardous substance by more environmental friendly alternatives, AND - Minimize input of hazardous substances OR - Minimize input of hazardous substances from industry, households, agriculture ...– <p>Litter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimize input of litter from ... , - Products are designed, produced, used and reused, recycled and disposed to minimize marine litter, - Amounts of litter are significantly reduced on beaches and in the sea 	<p>Loss and disturbance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable practices of activities that causing loss and disturbance to the seabed, OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Sustainable fishery practices, AND o Sustainable practices for extraction of oil, gas and minerals, AND o Ecosystem-based planning of marine infrastructure, AND o Best practices for dredging and of depositing of dredged material <p>Noise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No proposals <p>Maritime activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement of international regulations – no illegal discharges - Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution - Effective emergency and response capabilities - Minimize the contribution to eutrophication and operational pollution from ships - No introductions of non-indigenous species from ships- - Minimum harmful air emissions from ships - Zero discharges from offshore platforms - [Minimum threats from offshore installations]⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An effectively managed, ecological coherent and representative network of marine protected areas - Ecosystem-based planning of ecologically important areas outside MPAs - Minimized disturbance of species by human activities, including access to migration routes - Human induced mortality of species at sustainable level - Effective and regional coordinated conservation plans and measures for threatened species and habitats - The food web is balanced in species composition and total abundance - The food web is assessed holistically as an interconnected system"

¹ proposed revision by Maritime 10-2019 (the original segment uses the term 'friendly' instead of 'sustainable')

² new proposal to be discussed by State and Conservation 11-2019 (the original segment read "Favourable status of Baltic biodiversity")

³ under discussion