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This document has been revised to include input to the HOLAS III planning process by STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 and Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop, contained in Annexes 1-3.

Background

GEAR 20-2019 noted that the proposed timeline outlines a HOLAS III process as prepared by the Secretariat. In the proposed timeline development work takes place prior to the start of the assessment process, which strives to have assessment results and supporting material in place for approval to make them available for national reporting purposes and which includes only one iteration of assessment.

The meeting in principle supported the suggestion that intersessional preparatory work for HOLAS III should take the form of three consecutive, interlinking work strands focusing on indicators, dataflows, and assessments and methodologies respectively and invited the Secretariat to prepare a draft for a project proposal for the dataflow strand, to be presented to STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 and GEAR 21-2019 for review. The meeting further invited the Secretariat and the relevant Expert Groups to prepare more specific information on identified gaps and development needs for the various work strands not covered by the indicator work, as identified in the HOLAS II process or in subsequent work and to continue the discussion on the topic in GEAR 21-2019.

GEAR 20-2019 also discussed components of HOLAS III, including aspects possibly missing, needing further development or benefitting from a different approach based on the work done under HOLAS II and start considering what might be needed for HOLAS III in terms of e.g. MSFD requirements, agreed to further elaborate the initial proposal of the components of HOLAS III as included in Annex 1 of this document, and invited countries to provide comments and suggestions to these components to the Secretariat by 12 August 2019. No further comments were received by the established deadline.

The Secretariat was invited to submit a further developed proposed plan for HOLAS III to STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 and GEAR 21-2019 meetings, respectively. Such a further developed plan is contained in this document, and associated documents [5-1](#), [5-5](#), [5-6](#), for review and input. The intention is to submit the provisional plan, including input from both State and Conservation 11-2019 and GEAR 21-2019, to HOD 57-2019 for approval, together with the project plan for the second step of the preparatory phase (as outlined below). Should the provisional plan be approved a more specific timeline would be developed, as well as a project plan for the third step of the preparatory phase.

Please note that following possible input from the Second indicator workshop, as well as from State and Conservation 11-2019 a revised version of this document may be submitted prior to GEAR 21-2019.

Actions requested:

The Meeting is invited to:

- provide input to the proposed timeline and process of HOLAS III as needed;
- consider and support the inclusion of 2016 in the assessment period, and consider the possible partial inclusion of 2021 data, dependent on data reporting;
- provide further input to the list of aspects which might be missing, need further development or benefit from a different approach compared HOLAS II (contained in Annex 1 of this document);
- endorse the proposed provisional plan and agree to submit it to HOD 57-2019 for approval.

Provisional plan for HOLAS III

Early planning for the HOLAS III process has been identified as important for the successful implementation of the next holistic assessment, but also for a number of related HELCOM processes. These include consolidation and further development of indicators, improving dataflows, improvements and further developments of the cumulative impacts and economic and social analysis and to ensure the continued policy relevance of the work and the assessments.

The planning for HOLAS III needs to be done within the framework delineated by the BSAP and in accordance with the needs of the Contracting Parties with respect to other international commitments. This places some limitations on how dynamic the HOLAS III process can be and necessitates that some trade-offs be considered early in the process. It also sets hard deadlines which need to be met in order to optimize the added value and to make full use of the HOLAS III work. Efforts have been made to take these considerations into account when developing the provisional plan contained in this document. Input and information related to the HOLAS III process brought forward by the HELCOM Expert and Working Groups have been included as far as possible. In addition, feedback on the HOLAS II process, received through the regional survey on the process and results of the project conducted by GEAR in 2018 as well as comments from the regional State of the Baltic Sea report consultation process have been taken into account (please see [document 4-1](#) to GEAR 20-2019 for more information). More specific details raised under these processes will need to be considered throughout the HOLAS III process.

GEAR 20-2019 discussed components of HOLAS III, including aspects possibly missing, needing further development or benefitting from a different approach based on the work done under HOLAS II and started considering what might be needed for HOLAS III in terms of e.g. MSFD requirements. The questions related to how to improve the HOLAS III assessment in comparison to HOLAS II were also posed to the Second HELCOM Indicator workshop and will be presented to STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019. Collated input can be found in Annex 1 to this document.

Following the wishes expressed by the Contracting Parties the provisional plan contained in this document encompasses only one iteration of the assessment. Similarly, the plan follows the general structure agreed on under HOLAS II and the workflow is planned to focus on production and approval of thematic assessments prior to the work on the summary report commencing. Adhering to the request by the CPs, to the extent possible development work is planned to not take place concomitantly with data collection and assessments.

The provisional plan divides the work into two phases:

- **A three-part HOLAS III preparatory phase** focusing on consolidation and development of indicators, establishing and improving data flows, and refining and further developments of the assessments. The preparatory phase is proposed to run from the beginning of 2020-to the end of 2021, in a staggered structure.
- **A HOLAS III assessment phase**, consisting of data collection, indicator evaluations, integrated assessments and report production, would begin in late 2021 and run to the end of 2023.

The following sections in this document provide more in-depth information on the various phases and steps. This division of the work is intended to give more time for preparation and more evenly spread the need for input by the expert and resource allocation the Contracting Parties. It also strives to give as clear a structure and timeline for approval processes of the respective products as possible.

Provisional draft timeline for HOLAS III

To support the initial discussions and scoping for HOLAS III the Secretariat has prepared information on a draft tentative timeline for the proposed work on HOLAS III (figure 1). Each of the phases and main steps included in the Gantt chart are further elaborated in the respective sections of this document.

		2020				2021				2022				2023				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Preparatory phase	Indicator development/consolidation																	
	Establishing and ensuring dataflows																	
	Refining and further developments of assessments																	
HOLAS III	Indicators	Data collection																
		Data approval																
		Indicator evaluations																
		Approval of indicator evaluation results																
		Update indicator reports																
		Updating indicator report metadata and maps																
		Approval of indicator reports																
		Prepare supplementary information																
		Approval of report content																
	Indicator based integrated assessments	Run integrated assessments																
		Validating and approving results																
		Prepare supplementary information																
		Approval of report content																
	Cumulative impacts assessment	Data collection																
		Data approval																
		Running indices																
		Metadata descriptions																
		Validating and approving results																
		Prepare supplementary information																
		Approval of report content																
	Economic and social analysis assessment	Data collection																
		Data approval																
		Analysis																
		Validation and approval																
		Prepare supplementary information																
		Approval of report content																
	Report	Collate and write summary report text																
		Create synthesized figures																
		Approval of report content																
		Website production																
Layout																		
Publication																		

Figure 1. Provisional draft timetable for HOLAS III.

HOLAS III Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase is suggested to include three steps (as illustrated in figure 2). Each step is briefly outlined below, and is complimentary to the following steps.

		2020				2021				2022				2023			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4												
Preparatory phase	Indicator development/consolidation																
	Establishing and ensuring dataflows																
	Refining and further developments of assessments																

Figure 2. Provisional timeline of HOLAS III preparatory phase.

Step 1: Indicators (Q2 2018-Q3 2021) (document 5-7 to this meeting)

The first step focuses on core indicators and this work strand is already established. The work has commenced as outlined in the section on indicators below and is planned to continue until late 2021. A separate document (document 5-7) outlining how to take the work forward will be made available to the meeting.

Review of existing indicators (Q1 2018- Q4 2019)

This part of the process is outlined in the plan approved by HOD 54-2018, but encompasses the following main steps:

- Where are we with our existing indicators?
- How well do they match the policy requirements?
- Policy prioritization for inclusion in HOLAS III and beyond
- Technical input, what is feasible by 2021 and what would it take to get there?
- Plan for what indicators to consolidate and develop for HOLAS III

Further developments and consolidation (Q1 2020-Q3 2021)

This part of the process will be planned and prepared as part of the work of the indicator review, largely guided by the work of the two indicator workshops. It will focus on finalizing already initiated and ongoing work on indicators, as well as on those indicators agreed on as being priorities for HOLAS III, based both on the policy priority and the technical feasibility. For those being part of the prioritization process a clear workplan is to be developed for each indicator. Any indicator not ready by the end of 2021 they will not be included in HOLAS III.

Step 2: Establishing and ensuring data flows (Q3 2020-Q4 2021) ([document 5-6](#) to this Meeting)

The following step, step number two, focuses on improving and establishing dataflows to support the assessments. Data collation and validation was identified as one of the most time consuming and resource intensive aspects of the HOLAS II process, and as such further development of this work strand will bring direct added value to the process. Establishing as many frequent and regular data flows as possible prior to the start of HOLAS III also minimizes the need for ad hoc data calls. This step is partially guided by the work on indicators (e.g. what indicators and in what format are likely to be included in the assessment, are there gaps in the dataflows and how can these be filled prior to the assessment phase etc.) but it also expands to include those assessments under HOLAS which are not based on core indicators, namely the pressure and impact indices and the economic and social analyses (ESA).

This work will be based on the initial gap analysis of existing assessment dataflows prepared by the Secretariat, presented at State and Conservation 9-2018 and 10-2019. It will focus on establishing consistent and functional dataflows, as well as data handling and data storage infrastructure. The need to even and spread out the data reporting to ease the load on national and regional data hosts at times of peak activity (e.g. for MSFD reporting) has been highlighted by State and Conservation 9-2018. State and Conservation has also supported that more frequent, more regular reporting facilitates communication between the data host and the reporter, the identification and solving of issues, better governance and control over data quality.

GEAR 20-2019 invited the Secretariat to prepare a draft for a project proposal for the dataflow strand, which has been submitted to STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 and GEAR 21- 2019 for review ([document 5-6](#) to this Meeting), with the intention to submit it to HOD 57-2019 for approval.

Step 3: Refining and further developing assessments and methodology (including but not limited to suggestions in documents [5-1](#) and [5-5](#) to this Meeting)

GEAR 20-2019 further invited the Secretariat and the relevant Expert Groups to prepare more specific information on identified gaps and development needs for the various work strands not covered by the indicator work, namely the Pressure and Impact indices and the ESA work, as identified in the HOLAS II process or in subsequent work. The meeting further agreed to continue the discussion on the topic in GEAR 21-2029.

The third step of the preparatory phase is proposed to focus on refining and further developing assessments and methodology, including spatial aspects, aspects on sensitivity and confidence ([document 5-5](#)), further developments of economic and social analyses (ESA) ([document 5-1](#)) as well as modification and refinements of the integrated assessment tools following the incorporation of new data strands stemming from step two and possible new or consolidated indicators stemming from step one.

HOLAS III Assessment Phase

Proposed Timing and Work Strands

The proposed work strands and their respective timing under the project can be found in figure 3. This has been elaborated based on the experiences from HOLAS II and the input received from the Lessons learned survey and from the experts and WGs involved in the work, as well as from the Second HELCOM Indicator workshop. The proposed timing of the work in the assessment phase has, as far as possible, been planned to ensure that the assessment results and supporting material are in place for approval in time to make them available for national consultation and reporting purposes.

As a result of the proposed timeline, and to ensure the assessment covers a six year period, the year 2016 which was already included in HOLAS II, would be included also in HOLAS III. In order to incorporate data for a six year assessment period, in practice the years 2016- 2021, and to avoid reiterating the assessment in 2023, the reporting of national data for the year 2021 will need to be made available with no more than one year of time-lag in order to be included in the assessment. Realistically this might result in 2021 data not being included for some of the topics.

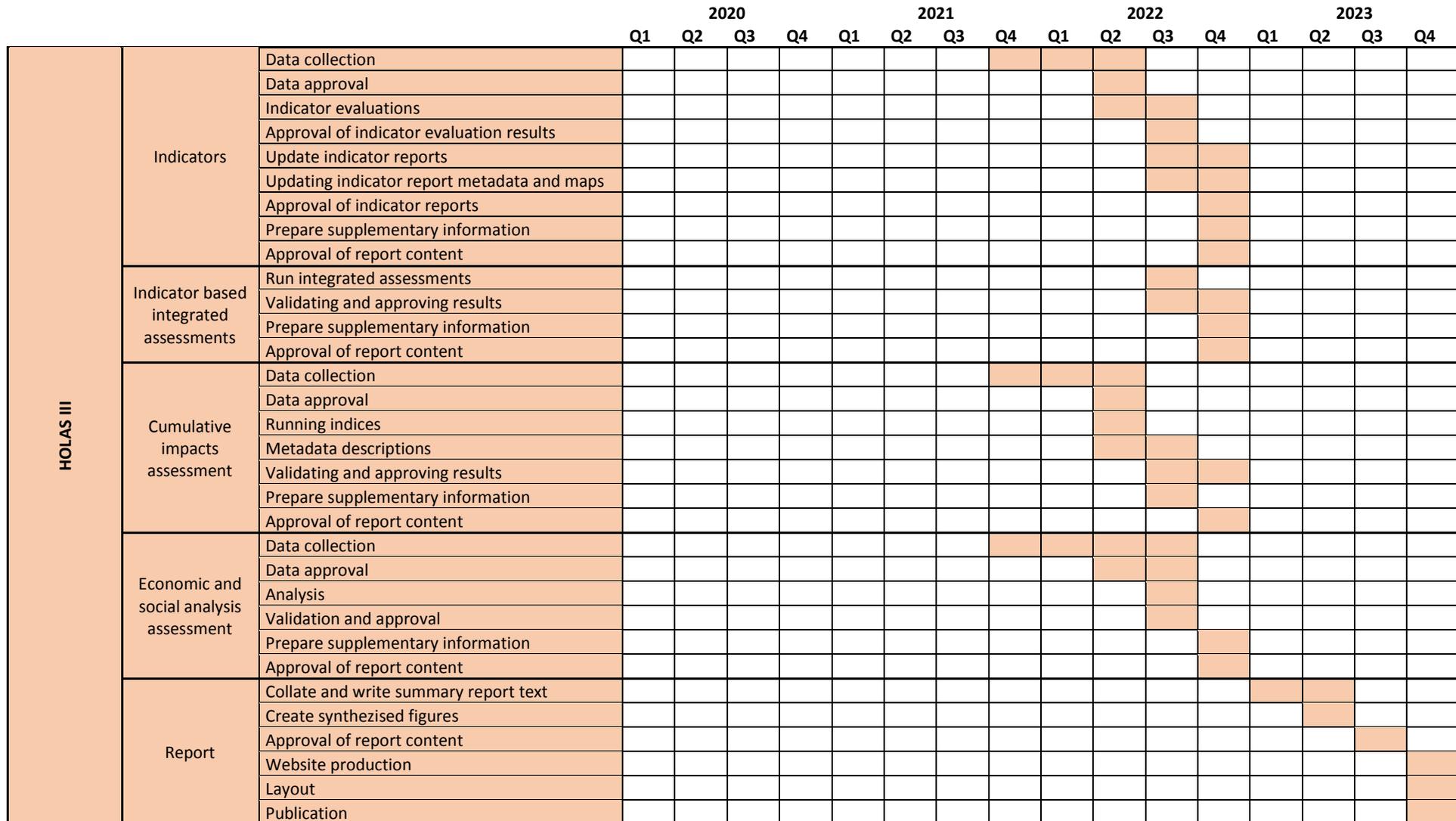


Figure 3. Gantt chart of assessment phase

Proposed Process and Workflow

The proposed process and workflow of the assessment phase is illustrated in figure 4. Each stage of the process is followed by an approval step, with the aim to minimize the risk for ripple effects from changes in one stage affecting several other phases. This is intended to help minimize the need for repetition and give each consecutive stage a firm basis to build on. This also gives more freedom for e.g. national consultations for those Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States and might wish to use results in their national reporting.

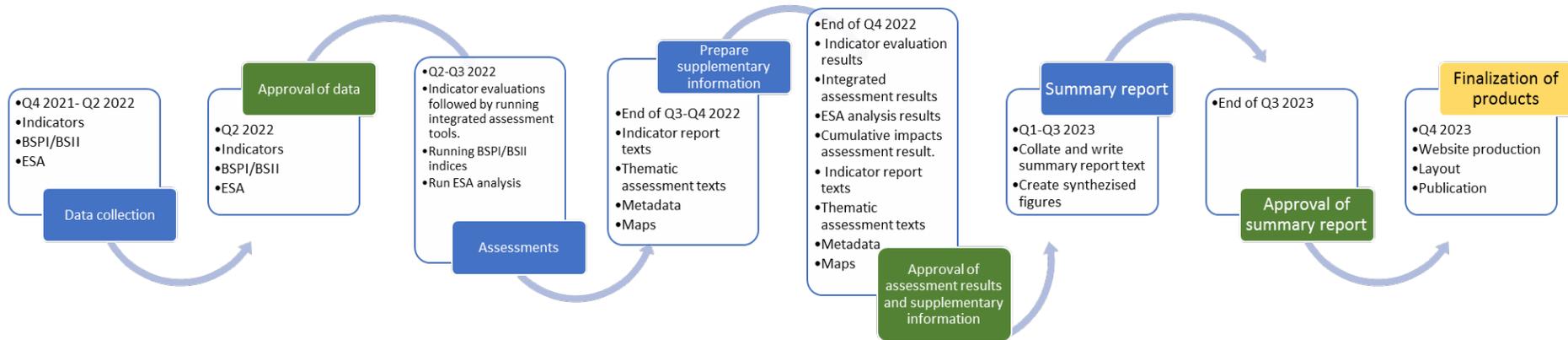


Figure 4. Proposed process and workflow for HOLAS III

Annex 1. Initial Scoping for Planning HOLAS III

This annex contains the components of HOLAS III, including aspects possibly missing, needing further development or benefitting from a different approach based on the work done under HOLAS II as proposed by GEAR 201-2019, the Second HELCOM Indicator workshop and will be presented to STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019. The preliminary sorting of the topics into Design, Structure and Content has been done by the Secretaria.

Initial Scoping for Planning HOLAS III, prepared by GEAR 20-2019, ~~and~~ the Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop and STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019.

Topic	Missing	Improve	Revise	Comments (including possible sources)
Comparability of results		(x)		Ensure that, wherever possible, results are comparable between assessments (between successive assessment).
BSPI/BSII		x		Ensure that the indices are fit for purpose.
Continuous update of indicators	x			Resources needed to automatize indicator evaluation.
Trends		x		Important for interpreting indicator results.
Compare indicator and the results of the indices	x			E.g. for ecosystem component layers with corresponding indicator evaluation results.
Structure of report and results		x		Ensure the results are, to the extent possible, optimized for national use.
How to capture progress in a six-year period?		x		More focus on understanding, analyzing and presenting the results.
Use same structure as HOLAS II				Using a similar structure to HOLAS II allows for more focus to be put on analysis,
Indicator and assessment tools fit for rev. Com. Dec.		x		Should be part of the intersessional preparatory work.
Only one assessment				

Design

Strucutre

Content

Indicator evaluations and supporting material available in time for national reporting.		X		Strive to fit the timetable to have approved products in time for national processes
Use of SOM and ACTION project products and results for HOLAS III	x	x		Consider how to pick up on work that has been done intersessionally between HOLAS II and HOLAS III
How to address include expert judgement assessment				E.g. for invasive species
Benthic habitats	x	x		Need to consider a possible alternative timeline for approval?
Food web aspects	x	x		Food web aspects need to be significantly improved.
How to improve integration of information		x		Integration of various datalayers, as well as improved storytelling for the report
Effectiveness of measures				Use the results of SOM and ACTION
Climate change	x			How to include climate change in the assessment and the reports. From EN CLIME
More focus on activities, sources, distribution etc.		x		From SOM work.
Report structure		X	X	Review the HOLAS II reporting structure.
Resource needs		x		Start securing resources, consider opportunities to further work etc. under possible projects.
Dataflows		X		Even and spread out the reporting to ease the load on national and regional data hosts at times of peak activity, frequent, more regular reporting facilitates communication between the data host and the reporter, the identification and solving of issues, better governance and control over data quality.

Thematic assessments first				Thematic assessments should be produced and approved prior to the summary report, and the latter should build on the former.
Timelags		x		In HOLAS II it was challenging to work with the time lags between the various work strands and
Dataflows which feed into the assessment in 2022			x	For several topics it will not be possible to provide data for the year 2021 within the proposed timeframe for the indicator evaluations
Using the same data for several different parts of the assessment		x		Consider if there is an issue associated with using the same pressures/activities data in several parts of the assessment (cumulative buildup skewing the importance of some pressures?)
Pressure state linkages needs to be strengthened, especially for hazardous substances		x		
Include the EGs more closely in the process, especially for the topics which have no indicators.		x		
<u>ICES dataflows, define the minimum requirements for data to be accepted for the assessment</u>		x		<u>could be included in the monitoring guidelines as well</u>
<u>can 2016 data be re-reported to the EU Commission?</u>				<u>there is already variation in the timeframe that is reported to the Commission, one year not a big issue. Could be brought to WG GES to get a common perspective?</u>
<u>changes in EU reporting requirements for 2024</u>		x		<u>the EU needs will be defined early in the process so that this can be considered when running the assessments, possibly in 2022, in the effort to limit the need for double reporting</u>

<u>Data for several topics might not make it for the year 2021 (especially eutrophication)</u>		<u>x</u>		<u>e.g. ICES reporting sets some of the timelines and so this is out of the hands of the expert</u>
<u>if using the same year twice this might influence the assessment results</u>				<u>it should be explored how the year affects the respective assessments? Is it a problem?</u>
<u>how to dislocate the indicator result approval process from that of the integrated assessment?</u>			<u>x</u>	

Annex 2 Input to planning HOLAS III provided by the Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop 16-18 October 2019

General input to the plan for HOLAS III:

- Do not do an 'update' step with an additional year of data.
- Produce the thematic assessments first, and the holistic/summary assessment after.
- Ensure Expert Groups are involved in relevant steps of any update of the BSPI/BSII.
 - The Workshop discussed the assessment of cumulative impacts (BSPI, BSII) in relation to the proposed indicator on cumulative impacts on the seabed, and noted that the cumulative impacts indicator looks at the ecosystem component seabed, whereas BSPI and BSII are combining information from multiple identified human pressures (not only those identified as affecting the seabed) and impacts, providing spatial representation of where most pressures overlap with areas of high biological value.
 - The Workshop considered that the weights of specific pressures in the cumulative assessment need to be considered carefully, in order to avoid over dominance by some of the pressures.
- The Workshop considered that regarding the expert networks, producing the indicator reports was the most time-consuming part of HOLAS II, and thus it was hoped that the content of the indicator reports would not be too largely changed for HOLAS III. The Workshop took note that the proposal for restructuring of the indicator report by the Secretariat does not require major changes in provided information, but is more related to how to present the information.
- The Workshop considered that in HOLAS II, the workflow including data flow, indicator fact sheets, aggregated assessments and supplementary reports was challenging, and discussed that adding additional information on cross-linkages may further add complications to the work process.
- Encourage effort to improve data flows, including as short as possible lag in data availability.
 - The Workshop discussed that reducing the time lag between data collection and reporting might be challenging for some of the indicators. Current reporting deadlines are realistic with fixed data delivery deadlines, and it might not be possible to speed up the process.
- Ensure other supporting information (research and national) is incorporated to provide a scientifically and ecologically relevant overview/context.
- Carry out thematic Workshops at strategic points to get full potential from the available data
 - For example: 1) to develop an overview of each theme, 2) understanding and interpretation of integration step, and 3) cross-linkages (e.g. between themes, e.g. biodiversity-eutrophication).
 - Thematic approach should bring together all relevant people (across groups) at appropriate time (e.g. avoid overlap and duplication of work).

Role of HELCOM indicators (e.g. in HOLAS III)

- The summary report should present an ecologically relevant assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea environment, of which the indicator-based assessment is a core component.

Additional relevant 'non-indicator' data strands, e.g. Economic Social Analyses or other are to be included to ensure full coverage and relevance.

- Operational core indicators (e.g. based on national monitoring data and having threshold values) should form the major basis of the assessment, though other relevant or supporting data/information and needs to be considered. Such other supporting information should be used to provide a context and broad thematic assessment (e.g. relevant data calls, other national monitoring data, and other available data or research).
- Address BSAP objectives and support the needs of HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States.

Annex 3 Input to planning HOLAS III provided by STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019, 21-25 October 2019

7J.30 The Meeting took note of the preliminary overall timeline and the proposed tentative steps (document 7J-4, Presentation 5), as presented by the Secretariat.

7J.31 The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Secretariat that while effort has been made to try to improve on challenges identified under HOLASII the plan for HOLAS III needs to be elaborated within the framework delineated by the BSAP and the other international commitments (such as the MSFD) and in accordance with the needs outlined by the Contracting Parties. This places some limitations on how dynamic the HOLAS III process can be and necessitates that some trade-offs be considered early in the process. It also sets hard deadlines which need to be met in order to optimize the added value and to make full use of the HOLAS III work.

7J.32 Overall the Meeting welcomed the early planning and that effort has be made to incorporate the input received during and following HOLAS II.

7J.33 The Meeting considered the proposal to include 2016 in the assessment period for HOLAS III. The Meeting invited GEAR to clarify possible issue with reporting 2016 data to the EU Commission twice, both as regards MSFD requirements and as regards possible technical challenges. The Meeting also asked that the effect on the assessment of including the same year twice be explored during the assessment process.

7J.34 The Meeting stressed that for several topics included in the assessment it is highly challenging that data can be delivered with only one years time lag and that this could result in 2021 being a data weak year, a possible trade off which needs to be considered when agreeing on the structure of the assessment. A detailed analysis, based on national data streams and ICES and HELCOM procedure, is needed to identify for which parameters it will be difficult to report data in time for the assessment in 2022. The result of the analysis will be presented at STATE&CONSERVATION 12-2020 and possible solution discussed. A detailed plan for the assessment should be produced for every thematic assessment.

7J.35 The Meeting supported that the minimum requirement for supporting information needed for data reporting to e.g. ICES needs to be clearly identified and communicated prior to data reporting taking place in order to speed up the reporting.

7J.36 The Meeting highlighted the importance of ensuring that the HOLASIII results are available for the Contracting Parties also being EU member states to support their national MSFD reporting process, and to the extent possible ensure that the processes doesn't necessitate national experts repeating the assessments at regional and national scale.

7J.37 The Meeting took note of the information by the EU that the reporting needs for the MSFD article 8 reporting are to be defined earlier on in the process and took note of the offer to present the current proposal for reporting at GEAR 21-2019. The Meeting took note of the proposal by the EU to bring the issue of the time period for assessments to WG GES in an effort to come up with a common approach.

7J.38 The Meeting endorsed the proposal of the preparatory phase for HOLAS III outlined in the preliminary plan. The Meeting agreed that for the assessment phase 6 years of data is needed, and agreed not to include data earlier than 2016, meaning that data until minimum 2021 will be needed for the assessment.

7J.39 The Meeting was of the opinion that the results from the indicator evaluations and the integrated assessments should be approved in separate, consecutive processes.

7J.40 The Meeting agreed to forward the proposed project structure and timeline to GEAR 21- 2019 for further discussion with the intention to submit a preliminary plan and project structure to HOD 57-2019 for approval. The Meeting invited the Secretariat and co-chairs of State & Conservation to communicate the discussion in State and Conservation to GEAR 21-2019.

7J.41 The Meeting welcomed the project proposal for the HELCOM Data Flow project (Document 7J-5, presentation 6) and invited the Secretariat to include in the gap analysis alignment with MSFD descriptors, to clearly distinguish between cumulative impact indicator (CumI) and BSPI/BSII, and to include a mapping of BSPI datasets to MSFD criteria/descriptor. The Meeting also recommended to include in the outputs of the project concrete recommendations to State & Conservation on modifications of reporting requirements. The Meeting took note of the comment by Estonia that the project would carry resource implication nationally.

7J.42 The Meeting took note of the need to secure co-funding from the Contracting Parties for the project.

7J.43 The Meeting in principle endorsed the proposal for HELCOM Data Flow project. The Meeting agreed to send the proposal to GEAR 21-2019 for endorsement, with the intention to submit to HOD 57-2019 for approval.

7J.44 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to consider the possibility to provide national funding for the work.