



Outcome of the Intersessional Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 25A-2021)

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the outcome of GEAR 25-2021 (Paragraph 6.5), the Intersessional Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 25A-2021) was held online on 1 December 2021.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by Delegations from Finland and Sweden. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Andrea Weiss, Germany, Chair of the Gear Group. Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary and Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, Associate Professional Secretary acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in the invitation to the Meeting.

Agenda Item 2 Scoping for a potential HORIZON grant application

2.1 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 25-2021 noted the opportunity for HELCOM to apply to the HORIZON call “Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal ([HORIZON CL6 2022 GOVERNANCE 01](#))” under the grant “Multi layer governance performance of marine policies (HORIZON CL6 2022 GOVERNANCE 01 03)”. The Meeting further recalled that GEAR 25-2021 had invited Contracting Parties to submit national positions and general comments to the Secretariat in preparation for an intersessional meeting to further discuss a possible grant application.

2.2 The Meeting took note that support for a potential project had been expressed and no Contracting Party in the Gear Group had objected such a project.

2.3 The Meeting took note of the potential activities to be included in a proposal to the HORIZON call elaborated by the Secretariat based on the feedback received following GEAR 25-2021 (document 2-1).

2.4 The Meeting further elaborated the project scope as included in the [Miro board](#).

2.5 The Meeting agreed that a subset of themes should be included in the project, possibly themes with commonality across several strategies/policies, e.g. the BSAP and the Green Deal. For these themes the relevant governance structures for implementation could be mapped followed by a study on the possible barriers.

2.6 The Meeting acknowledged that the governance structures tend to be heavily influenced by legacy aspects (i.e. current governance builds on previous governance decisions), which in turn, over time, can become barriers for further progress, and emphasized that this could be an important aspect to include in the project work.

2.7 The Meeting took note that Sweden has conducted case studies on ecosystem-based management from a bottom-up perspective and the results of these studies could be utilized in the project.

2.8 The Meeting pointed out that it is important to look into the interactions between regional, national and local scales.

- 2.9 The Meeting acknowledged that at this stage the project application should not propose already the possible answers but should focus on asking the right questions.
- 2.10 The Meeting pointed out that expertise that goes beyond the usual range of HELCOM experts could be needed in the project, e.g. experts on law, history and social sciences.
- 2.11 The Meeting took note that the Barcelona Convention could be approached as a potential project partner to enable comparison across Regional Sea Conventions.
- 2.12 The Meeting proposed approaching MEDPAN regarding potentially partnering in the project.
- 2.13 The Meeting pointed out that the grant call lists e-government as one focus topic and noted that this needs to be taken into account in the application.
- 2.14 The Meeting proposed that the project could look into how new knowledge and data, e.g. satellite observations, citizen science and modelling, is taken on board in HELCOM and what obstacles or barriers might exist preventing this from taking place.
- 2.15 The Meeting pointed out that the focus of the project should not be in enhancing the framework for ecosystem services as they are an important tool but not the end goal of ecosystem based management.
- 2.16 The Meeting acknowledged that the project itself cannot change the governance structures, but it should provide information on the barriers for implementation that would be useful for better reach the set targets.
- 2.17 The Meeting was of the view that ministries would not be suitable partners for the project, but the partnership should comprise of other agencies or research institutions. The Meeting took note of the clarification that based on the information provided as part of the call HELCOM is eligible to be a lead partner in the project.
- 2.18 The Meeting acknowledged that the Heads of Delegation need to be made aware of the project proposal and approve HELCOM participation in the project.
- 2.19 The Meeting emphasized that the involvement of also other Contracting Parties is crucial in taking the project proposal forward.
- 2.20 The Meeting agreed on the next steps as follows:
- HELCOM Secretariat to draft the next version of the project proposal including an indication of the expertise needed in the partnership and send it to the Gear Group contacts as soon as possible.
 - The Gear Group contacts to propose suitable partners in their countries which would bring the needed expertise and inform the Secretariat (luke.dodd@helcom.fi) **by 31 January 2021**.
 - New project planning meeting to be organized in early 2022.
 - The Secretariat to approach other Regional Sea Conventions informally to ask for their interest to take part in the project.

Agenda Item 3 Outcome of the Meeting

- 3.1 The draft outcome was prepared by the Secretariat and adopted via correspondence.

Annex 1. List of participants

Name	Representing	Organization	Email
Andrea Weiss	Chair	UBA	andrea.weiss@uba.de
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