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Background

This document summarizes the status of ongoing HELCOM projects and those finalized in 2014, with a focus on their main achievements and outcomes during 2014. Hyperlinks to more detailed project descriptions on the HELCOM web-site are provided.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Information on on-going HELCOM projects

1. [Quality assurance and integration of zooplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM ZEN QAI\), 2011-2013/14](#)

Chairman: Ms. Elena Gorokhova, Sweden

The overarching aim of the project is to ensure and maintain high quality standard of the international Baltic regional zooplankton monitoring within HELCOM and to assure data comparability and their effective usage. The main activities are training courses/workshops; revising and updating the Monitoring Manual; designing and maintaining inter-calibration exercises; updating taxonomic lists; evaluating applicability of zooplankton-based indices as environmental indicators; and revising recommendations for zooplankton biomass assessment.

HELCOM ZEN QAI has contributed to development of a zooplankton core indicator and an evaluation of pelagic food web indicators within HELCOM CORESET project (2010-2013) and has continued with operationalization of a zooplankton food web indicator within CORESET II in 2014 and forward. The evaluation of region-specific reference values and GES targets is currently being conducted using regional data and the results will be conceptually and methodologically harmonized within HELCOM CORESET II and MORE projects and with OSPAR COBAM.

Activities to date include two workshops, a Ring test, and a series of discussions in conjunction with other relevant meetings (ICES WGZE, Baltic Sea Science conference, OIKOS conference, various HELCOM meetings, etc.). Also a manuscript has been prepared that is about to be submitted as a research paper.

The HELCOM ZEN QAI project was originally planned to terminate in December 2013, but due to various issues (i.e. delays in starting the project, longer than expected time needed to analyse the results of the Ring test, HELCOM MONAS 19/2013 supported the extension of the project until December 2014 with no additional funding. A continuation of the project in 2015 and onwards will be put forward to STATE-CONSERVATION 2-2015, tentatively focusing on indicator validation and application in the HELCOM assessment system.

2. [Quality assurance of phytoplankton in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM PEG\), 2014-2016](#)

Project Manager: Ms. Iveta Jurgensone, Latvia

The main aim of the project is to ensure and maintain high quality standard of the phytoplankton monitoring within the HELCOM COMBINE Programme. This is done by organizing annual training courses, intercalibration exercises, and jointly harmonizing the sampling, treatment and reporting procedures. HELCOM PEG also maintains the phytoplankton [biovolume list](#). The project updates annually an Indicator Fact Sheet on phytoplankton species and develops new reports to the State and Conservation Working Group.

The continuation of the HELCOM PEG project for the period 2014-2016 was approved by HELCOM HOD 41-2013. The project held its annual workshop and training course on phytoplankton in Helsinki, Finland on 12–16 May 2014.

3. [Sixth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation \(HELCOM PLC-6\), 2012-2017](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Lars Svendsen, Denmark

The project is an implementation of HELCOM Recommendation [26/2](#) to periodically carry out a pollution load assessment (PLC) including a quantification of waterborne point, diffuse and natural sources.

The overall task of the project is to prepare a comprehensive assessment of the water- and airborne inputs and their sources to the Baltic Sea during the period 1994-2014 with more detailed assessment for 2014 by:

- updating the 5th Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-5) and the updated PLC report submitted to the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting (PLC-5.5), including information on nutrient inputs via air and water, as well as their sources;
- further updating the PLC Guidelines and extending them with new standardized methods, standard values, statistical assessment for improving data quality and quantifying uncertainty on national datasets to ensure more complete, consistent and comparable data between Contracting Parties, and complying with new requirements for follow-up of the fulfilment of nutrient input reduction targets agreed upon within HELCOM.

Project workshops were held on 24-26 February 2014, 2-4 June 2014 and 15-17 December 2014. Main outcomes of the project during 2014 included further elaboration of the PLC-6 guidelines, which were adopted in principle by HOD 46-2014. A few open issues still remain with the guidelines related to the reporting of industries (to be streamlined with EU reporting) and the periodic reporting requirements.

The project has collaborated closely with the PLUS project by giving input to the new PLC data base structure and the reporting templates.

4. [Development of HELCOM Pollution Load User System \(HELCOM PLUS\), 2012-2015](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Sriram Sethuraman, HELCOM Secretariat

The main purpose of the project is to modernize the HELCOM pollution load compilation (PLC) database in order to:

- facilitate the submission, correction, updating and quality assurance of national PLC data reported by Contracting Parties to HELCOM;
- improve and harmonize the quality and completeness of data in the database;
- ensure open access to up-to-date, quality checked PLC water data, and thus make it easier for interested users to access PLC data for viewing and downloading database contents via an application based on a well-defined internet-based interface, as well as facilitate the production of HELCOM assessments in a more timely and cost-efficient manner than is presently possible;
- develop a system which is user friendly, flexible and robust.

Since the approval of the PLUS project by HELCOM 34-2013, work has focused on implementation of WP 1, which has the task of designing the PLC database model in order to meet the reporting requirements of Contracting Parties according to PLC-6 guidelines and WP 2, which converted the existing MS Access database into the new MS SQL Server database according to the new data model structure.

The project is currently in WP 3, which involves finalization of the Data reporting templates and implementation of the Web Application for Data Upload functionality.

A quality checking system will be implemented during the first half of 2015 (WP 4) to provide reliable and high quality data for end users.

Since January 2014, the 5th, 6th and 7th workshops for PLUS project were held in Helsinki, Finland. The meetings focused on the approval of the PLUS data model and the functional design specification. The meeting also focused on reviewing and finalizing the Annual Data reporting templates. The final comments from the templates are being updated and the templates will be provided to the Contracting Parties during January, so that they can be used for testing during the PLUS 8-2015 workshop. The 8th PLUS workshop will be held on 10-11 February 2015, which will focus on testing of the Upload functionality of the Web Application by the Contracting Parties with 2013 annual data.

5. [Operationalization of HELCOM core indicators \(HELCOM CORESET II\), 2013-2015](#)

Project Manager: Ms. Lena Avellan, HELCOM Secretariat

HELCOM CORESET II works to operationalize the HELCOM core indicators on biodiversity and hazardous substances. The project also supports the development of a small number of other pressure core indicators. The commonly agreed set of core indicators are to be operationalized by mid-2015 when up-dated core indicator reports will be published online.

The core indicators are an integral part of the follow-up of the goals of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). For those Contracting Parties that are also EU member states, the HELCOM core indicators will provide the means of achieving regional coherence in reporting on several articles of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The assessment results from the indicators will be included in the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II).

The kick-off meeting (CORESET II 1-2014) was held 15 -16 January 2014 in Berlin. The meeting was held back-to-back with a HELCOM MORE project meeting. The second meeting (CORESET II 2-2014) was held 29-30 September 2014 in Gothenburg. A joint meeting was held 1 October between HELCOM and OSPAR experts involved in developing biodiversity indicators to identify opportunities for cooperation that were documented in a Communication paper.

The finalization of core indicator reports will be carried out in the first half of 2015 through physical thematic meetings as well as indicator specific teleconferences and correspondence.

6. [Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management \(HELCOM FISH-PRO II\), 2014-2018](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Jens Olsson, Sweden

This project continues the work of the HELCOM projects “Expert network on monitoring and protecting of coastal fish and lamprey species (HELCOM FISH Project), 2008-2010,” and “Project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management (HELCOM FISH-PRO) 2011-2013”.

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- a) Knowledge: to update and improve knowledge about occurrence, distribution, population and threat and/or decline of coastal fish based on all relevant data.
- b) Assessment and monitoring: to further develop different assessment and monitoring methodologies for coastal fish, including indicators with targets and reference values.
- c) Recommendations: provide advice to national authorities and ongoing HELCOM work on implementation of coastal fish related actions in the BSAP and MSFD.

During the year 2014 the project held its annual meeting in March and has, *inter alia*, contributed to the development and operationalization of the HELCOM core indicators regarding coastal fish, updated the coastal fish monitoring guidelines which were approved by the First Meeting of the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group, contributed to the HELCOM MORE project, made a review on the types of data collected within the small scale coastal commercial fishery to assess the use of this data for indicator development and status assessments, considered coastal fish monitoring and assessments in additional monitoring areas and submitted an application for funding for a recruitment area mapping workshop to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

7. [Making HELCOM eutrophication assessments operational \(HELCOM EUTRO-OPER\), 2014-2015](#)

Project Manager: Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, HELCOM Secretariat

The EUTRO-OPER project started in January 2014 and continues until the end of 2015. In order to frame the work and ensure progress, the project is divided into five work phases: 1) 1 April – 31 August 2014, 2) 1 September – 31 December 2014, 3) 1 January – 30 May 2015, 4) 1 June – 31 October 2015 and 5) 1 November – 31 December 2015. Clear tasks and deliverables have been determined for each work phase in the project road map, and a project meeting is scheduled at the beginning of each work phase, in order to review progress during the previous work phase and plan the work during the next one. EUTRO-OPER 1-2014 was held 24-25 March 2014 in Helsinki. EUTRO-OPER 2-2014 (7 May 2014) and EUTRO-OPER 3-2014 (3 September 2014) were held as video conferences. EUTRO-OPER 4-2015 will take place 9-11 February 2015 in Gdynia, Poland.

One of the main aims of EUTRO-OPER is to streamline the eutrophication assessment process. EUTRO-OPER 1-2014, with participation of the HELCOM COMBINE data host ICES, agreed on the data- and work flow to be implemented during the project. After defining methodology and drafting the roles of institutes participating in the work flow, the project and ICES have continued toward implementing it for the present core indicators DIN, DIP, chlorophyll-*a* and Secchi depth by producing data overviews, indicator updates and the assessment update through algorithms into a HELCOM Meeting Portal workspace, to be accessed for review by the project experts. This work will continue towards making operational connections to the HELCOM data and map service and the assessment web pages during work phases 3 and 4.

Another important aim of the project is to ensure that all data is made available for future assessments. The project sent a questionnaire to the Contracting Parties, via their EUTRO-OPER and MONAS contacts, in order to be able to list existing open-sea and coastal data sets on the eutrophication core parameters (nutrients, chlorophyll-*a*, Secchi depth, oxygen). The questionnaire was responded by Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Russia and Sweden, and together with information provided by ICES, a list of datasets to be included into the assessment process was formed. Most of the datasets are already presently reported to the ICES COMBINE database, while more information on possible additional national datasets would still be welcome, especially in cases where coastal data is not under the same holder as presently reported open-sea data. EUTRO-OPER has also successfully tested the possibility of expanding the eutrophication monitoring toward the use of remote sensing data, and these data flows are expected to be included into the assessment work flow during 2015.

EUTRO-OPER 1-2014 scrutinized the list of present core and candidate indicators relevant to eutrophication, and agreed that the following new indicators shall be developed during the project: total N, total P, nutrient ratios, Spring bloom chlorophyll-*a*, Cyanobacterial bloom accumulations and oxygen consumption. The development work begun during work phase 1, with the aim of finalizing the indicators along with the CORESET II schedule during work phase 3.

One of the tasks of EUTRO-OPER was to give a proposal on the harmonization of the coastal and open sea eutrophication assessment. As background work for this, the project has begun testing the HEAT assessment tool on selected coastal sites chosen by the Contracting Parties also EU Member States, based on WFD indicator data provided by them. The task, aimed to be finalized by the end of work phase 2, is led by Sweden, with contribution from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Sweden.

8. [Baltic Sea pilot project: testing new concepts for integrated environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea \(BALSAM\), 2013-2015](#)

Project Coordinator: Ms. Johanna Karhu, HELCOM Secretariat

BALSAM (October 2013 – March/May 2015) is an EU co-funded (0.46M €) project to enhance the capacity of the Baltic Sea states to develop their monitoring programmes by increasing and improving cross-border coordination and joint activities especially related to monitoring of biodiversity. The project activities have been organised into six work packages. The project consortium includes 19 partners and is coordinated by the HELCOM Secretariat.

As a first deliverable, BALSAM contributed to the creation of the HELCOM online Monitoring Manual, which was published in October 2014, by gathering information on COMBINE monitoring as well as monitoring of fisheries (ICES as a subcontractor), seals and seabirds, non-indigenous species and benthic habitats.

The project has also written guidelines for the monitoring of seals in the Baltic, which were adopted in the State 1-2014 meeting. Similar guidelines are being prepared for seabirds and benthic habitats. Seal abundance and distribution databases are also under development and will be made available online on the HELCOM website. A metadatabase for seabird monitoring in the Baltic is also being prepared and a network/platform of seabird monitoring experts is meeting on 28-29 January 2015 in Latvia to further discuss coordinated monitoring of seabirds in the Baltic to ensure data for core indicators.

Updated information on environmental research vessels as well as planned cruises and cruise reports have been gathered and will be made available on the HELCOM website to assist the Contracting Parties in further coordination. A proposal to revise HELCOM Recommendation 12/1 “Procedures for granting permits for monitoring and research activities in the territorial waters and exclusive economic zones, fishing zones or continental shelves” will also be presented to HELCOM groups.

Proposals on ways to improve data infrastructure and data flows for HELCOM assessments and core indicators are gathered in an action plan, which is prepared together with ICES as a subcontractor. The focus of the action plan is on COMBINE data (except nutrients, which is covered in EUTRO-OPER) and fisheries data.

For non-indigenous species, the Risk Assessment Tool under the HELCOM/OSPAR Harmonized Procedure on Exemptions under the Ballast Water Management Convention has been updated and improved, being now available online. Moreover, a user guide to help understand the tool has been developed. Regarding target species, the harmonized criteria for defining target species for the purpose for the ballast water decision support tool has been tested.

BALSAM is supervised by HELCOM Gear, and HELCOM State and Conservation provides technical guidance to the project. All project outcomes will be presented to HELCOM groups for discussion and further action. A joint final conference of BALSAM with the two sister projects IRIS-SES in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and JMP NS/CS in the North Sea and Celtic Sea, will be held on 24 April 2015 in Brussels.

9. [Joint Baltic Sea Sturgeon Rehabilitation \(EUSBSR Seed Money Facility\), 2013-2014](#)

Project Coordinator: Mr. Marco Milardi, HELCOM Secretariat

The Baltic Sturgeon Rehabilitation Project draws on the Baltic Sea Action Plan agreement on the restoration of lost biodiversity specifically mentioning the reintroduction of Baltic sturgeon. The project’s Inception Phase kicked off in November 2013 and was funded by the Seed Money facility of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (PA BIO). During the Inception Phase which came to its end in 2014, an outline and implementation plan for a common strategy towards the remediation of the species was developed. As a result, a joint project application was prepared and submitted to LIFE in 2014.

The LIFE project aims at the coordination of national activities in sturgeon restoration, including:

- development of an Action plan for the Restoration of the Baltic sturgeon;

- evaluation of the status of regional legal prerequisites and activities concerning sturgeon protection and remediation measures;
- expansion of breeding and release plans, with a strong focus on monitoring of the effects of the releases as well as the overlap of the habitat use with existing Natura 2000 sites;
- initiation of habitat evaluation in interested countries;
- Stakeholder involvement (especially fisheries) to increase awareness and compliance to minimize the mortality associated to incidental by-catch.

To determine intercultural differences in stakeholder attitude and compliance, a questionnaire will be designed to be used on a national basis. The final analysis is designated to provide detailed information about the attitude of stakeholders towards nature conservation, their assessment of their own role in this process, their compliance.

This will be the first study on this matter over the entire Baltic Sea, providing information also about the required communication strategy to improve the responsiveness and responsibility towards such programmes.

10. Modernization of HELCOM Marine Protected Areas database and Analysis of Ecological coherence of the network of Marine Protected Areas in the Baltic Sea, 2014-2015

Project Coordinator: Ms. Janica Borg, HELCOM Secretariat

The HELCOM MPAs* database will be modernized in 2015. HELCOM HABITAT 16-2014 established an intersessional Task Group, coordinated through the Secretariat, for the modernization of the HELCOM MPAs* database. At STATE 1-2014 a preliminary plan for the contents of the database was presented.

The main goals of the modernization of the HELCOM MPAs* database is to:

- Harmonise the database structure with existing equivalent databases, namely OSPAR Protected Areas database and Natura 2000 database
- Revise the database structure to meet data needs stemming from analysis of ecological coherence of MPAs, management plans and management effectiveness
- Incorporate dynamic map viewers to display borders of MPAs as well as overlay other relevant datasets (e.g. pressure related datasets) with MPAs
- Improve search tools
- Develop a new web data portal which will be hosted by the Secretariat thus ensuring flexibility for future modifications
- Develop a system which is user friendly and has a dual function as an updating tool for the Contracting Parties and an information bank for anyone interested in HELCOM MPAs.

The work is currently focusing on pinpointing the requirements and needs for the modernized database with the help of the MPA Task Group. A first draft for a plan of the new database is being circulated. The database will be built during spring 2015 and after data updating, it will be published in autumn 2015.

The modernization of the database will be accompanied by an analysis of ecological coherence of the network of MPAs in the Baltic Sea to be carried out by 2015. The previous assessment was carried out in 2010 (BSEP 124B), and its results showed that the network of HELCOM MPAs was not ecologically coherent. There were shortcomings regarding representativity, replication and connectivity of species and habitats, and the network was not adequate with respect to eutrophication, ship traffic intensity and fishing intensity. Only the size of the HELCOM MPAs was adequate. Best practices and data needs for the analysis of ecological coherence are being investigated simultaneously with the modernization of the HELCOM MPA database, in order to ensure that all relevant information on the MPAs required by the analysis will be available.

**former acronym: HELCOM BSPAs*

11. [Second holistic assessment of Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM HOLAS II\), 2014-2018](#)

Project Coordinator: Ms. Lena Bergström, HELCOM Secretariat

The HOLAS II project will produce a second HELCOM holistic assessment of Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea by mid-2018. The assessment will build on thematic components reflecting the status of the Baltic Sea such as biodiversity, eutrophication and hazardous substances and will support the follow-up of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. It will also address human activities and pressures affecting the status and social and economic impacts of changes in the status. The assessment will be developed so that it can serve as a regional “roof report” that can be used by Contracting Parties being EU Member States and as part of the reporting obligations under MSFD in 2018. The timetable for the project is adjusted accordingly.

The assessment will build on the HELCOM core indicators, currently further developed and operationalized in the CORESET II and EUTRO-OPER projects. Tools for assessing the status of different thematic components are planned to be developed in the project.

The project is guided through a Core team with nominated participants from the Contracting Parties and the work carried out under project is led by a project coordinator.

The project held its first meeting in December 2014.

[Information on HELCOM projects finalized in 2014](#)

1. [Revision of the HELCOM monitoring programmes \(HELCOM MORE\), 2012-2014](#)

Project Coordinator: Mr. Manuel Frias Vega, HELCOM Secretariat

The main objective of the project was to develop guidelines for a scientifically sound, well-coordinated, optimised and cost-effective joint HELCOM monitoring programme which provides the necessary data for HELCOM’s Baltic-wide indicator-based assessment activities, focusing on the state of the marine environment but also on human-induced pressures impacting the status. The project worked closely with the HELCOM CORESET II project, BALSAM and EUTRO-OPER.

During the course of the project, the project plan was revisited and it was agreed by HELCOM GEAR, that the revision of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy from 2005 would be an objective of the project along with the production of an overview of current marine monitoring in the Baltic Sea.

The HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy was revised accordingly (finalized by the fifth meeting 8–9 April 2013) and adopted by the 2013 Ministerial Meeting. The overview of existing HELCOM monitoring was also prepared in 2013, which includes all reported marine environmental monitoring activities. This information can also be viewed in a web map-based tool which was developed under the project.

HELCOM MORE continued its activities by revising the HELCOM monitoring programmes and guidelines, through the production of a joint [HELCOM Monitoring Manual](#) which is an online documentation of HELCOM monitoring requirements and the Contracting Parties’ implementation. The Monitoring Manual was finalized and published online in October 2014.

2. [Review of Fifth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation for 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting \(HELCOM PLC-5.5\), 2012-2013/14](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Lars Svendsen, Denmark

The overall task of the PLC-5.5 project was to update the Fifth Pollution Load Compilation with data on waterborne (and airborne) inputs to the Baltic Sea up to 2010 for the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting. The project involved data collection, submission, compilation, filling in of data gaps and preparation of the PLC-5.5 report. The PLC-5.5 dataset was also used for the calculation of revised country-wise allocation of

reduction targets of the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme, which was adopted by the 2013 ministerial meeting.

The [Review of the Fifth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation for the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting](#) was published in the HELCOM BSEP series (No. 141) in December 2013. The final report of the PLC-5.5 project, which provides more detailed information about trends in country-wise inputs to different sub-basins of the Baltic Sea, is undergoing graphic design and is expected to be published in early 2015.

3. [Implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan \(BASE project\), 2012-2014](#)

Project Manager: Ms. Saija Vuola, HELCOM Secretariat

The BASE Project ran from June 2012 to August 2014 with the objectives to further support the implementation of the BSAP in Russia and to provide input to the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting. The project was funded by the EU and had a budget of 2,5M€. The project was managed by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the HELCOM Secretariat in cooperation with St Petersburg Public Organisation Ecology & Business.

The BASE Project consisted of twelve sub-projects (pilot projects) addressing eutrophication, hazardous substances and biodiversity. The project also had a strong focus on public awareness.

The BASE Project [Final Report](#), prepared jointly by the BASE PIU and the Russian Partner, has been prepared specifically to serve general public. More detailed outcomes and reports of the project are available on the [HELCOM website](#).

4. [Completing the BSPA network, and the data and information on the Marine Protected Areas of the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM PROTECT\), 2013-2014](#)

Project Researcher: Ms. Janica Borg, HELCOM Secretariat

The PROTECT project ran from April 2013 to April 2014. The project resulted in the overview report "[Overview of the status of the network of Baltic Sea marine protected areas](#)", which was published as a background document for the HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting in October 2013. This report summarized the current situation of the HELCOM MPAs* network and highlights problems such as missing management plans or management plans in need of review.

The project also assisted Lead Party Finland in producing the new HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 "System of Coastal and Marine Baltic Sea Protected Areas (HELCOM MPAs*)", which was adopted 1 April 2014. This Recommendation supersedes HELCOM Recommendation 15/5 from 1994. In addition, the project resulted in an update of the HELCOM MPAs data, and gathered feedback from the Contracting Parties regarding the old HELCOM MPAs* database. This feedback initiated the ongoing process of modernising the HELCOM MPAs database.

**former acronym: HELCOM BSPAs*

5. [Encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial Planning in all countries around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation, 2013-2014](#)

[Technical assistance under HA Spatial Planning of EUSBSR](#)

Project Data Coordinator: Mr. Manuel Frias Vega, HELCOM Secretariat

HELCOM HORIZON was an EU-funded action aiming to support the work of HELCOM to implement the EUSBSR Horizontal Action "Spatial" for which HELCOM is the Horizontal Action Leader (HAL) together with VASAB. The project lasted 15 months (January 2013 -March 2014).

The project provided general administrative support for HA Spatial but focused on specific MSP implementation gaps in the Baltic Sea. These were identified by the Secretariat based on the regular MSP cooperation between the coastal states of the Baltic Sea within the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

These focus issues included support for drafting a concrete set of next steps for MSP in the Baltic Sea region, enhancing the involvement of fishing and the fisheries sector in MSP, drafting recommendations in order to minimise negative interactions between bird conservation and wind power farm development as well as facilitating access to GIS data and maps for MSP activities.

Outcomes

1) Regional MSP roadmap

The project contracted the University of Eastern Finland (Professor Kuokkanen) to draft the Baltic Sea MSP roadmap and incorporate comments from consultations carried out during spring 2013. The finalised roadmap was adopted by HELCOM, at the Ministerial Meeting 2013 (3 October 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark), and VASAB, by the VASAB Ministerial Conference in September 2014.

2) HELCOM Recommendation 34E/1 on windpower and bird migration

Further, new HELCOM Recommendation 34E/1 "Safeguarding important Bird Habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea" was developed, negotiated between the Baltic Sea countries and the EU and adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

3) Strengthening cooperation between MSP and fisheries related organizations

HELCOM organised a one-day workshop, "Fishing for Space" (Riga, 14.11.2013) back-to-back to, and in coordination with an EU MSP workshop on Fisheries and MSP. The workshop was also organised in consultation with relevant organizations such as ICES, BSRAC and environmental NGOs (CCB, WWF and Oceana). This action involved communication, participation, preparation of material/presentations during relevant meetings. A short-term fisheries expert (Mr. Marco Milardi) was employed at the HELCOM Secretariat to assist in the implementation of this activity.

4) Contribution to availability of coherent MSP-relevant data sets

The implemented activities included reorganization of the HELCOM data & maps website and HELCOM map service to give MSP data more visibility. The aim was to access data, particularly MSP data, in an easier way from a single and public website. HELCOM map and data service: <http://www.helcom.fi/baltic-sea-trends/data-maps/helcom-map-and-data-service> MSP map service: <http://maps.helcom.fi/website/msp/index.html>

5) Development of the HA Spatial website hosted by HELCOM in its capacity as co-lead for HA SPATIAL

The initiative enabled a more efficient search for MSP related information, to give an image of unity and coordination and to update MSP-related information easier. Link: <http://www.helcom.fi/action-areas/maritime-spatial-planning>

6) Contribution to a successful joint VMS data call with ICES

A successful joint VMS data call with ICES was produced, which will provide essential spatial data to be used in assessment work. Aggregated products derived from this data will be also published as a result of future work.

7) Developing project idea(s) for new activities as well as Flagship Project(s) in the Horizontal Action "Spatial"

The project enabled to support the drafting of the BALTWISE seed money application on MSP under the lead of SYKE (Finland), which received funding from the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility in January 2014.

6. [Test, further development and operationalization of the HELCOM biological survey protocols and A-4 risk assessments in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM ALIENS 3\), 2013 -2014](#)

Project contact person: Mr. Hermanni Backer, HELCOM Secretariat

The overall aim of HELCOM ALIENS 3 project ("Test, further development and operationalization of the HELCOM biological survey protocols and A-4 risk assessments in the Baltic Sea"), which finished in 2014, was to provide the HELCOM Contracting Parties with the possibility to test the regionally harmonised A-4 exemption process before the entry into force of the Ballast Water Management Convention.

For that purpose the project tested, further developed and operationalized the harmonized system for granting exemptions (according to Regulation A-4) to any requirements to apply regulation B-3 (Ballast Water Management for Ships) or C-1 (Additional Measures to those on Section B of the Convention) of the BWMC in intra-Baltic traffic, developed within the HELCOM ALIENS 2 project.

Work was divided into three work packages: WP 1: Pilot port surveys, WP 2: Testing and developing the decision support tool including the criteria and the list for the determination of target species, and WP 3: Project Management and Coordination.

During 2014, the project:

- developed a revised version of the online decision support tool on alien species introductions via ballast water. The old version of the tool was adopted in 2013 by HELCOM and OSPAR Contracting Parties as part (chapter 6) of the Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Harmonized Procedure on the Granting of Exemptions under the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, Regulation A-4. This improved version of the tool comprises a database on observations of alien species and physical features in ports, a list of target alien species, a list of all marine alien species observed in port surveys in the region and an agreed risk assessment model. It will allow administrations and ship owners to quickly identify routes that may qualify for exemptions to the application of ballast water management for ships (regulation B-3) and those that are unlikely to. The revised version of the online tool be jointly administered by the HELCOM and OSPAR Secretariats was released on 9 July 2014. Transferred to HELCOM servers during spring 2014, the tool was developed with funding through the HELCOM ALIENS 2, ALIENS 3 and BALSAM projects by the HELCOM Secretariat and Germany (BSH/Brockmann consult);
- supported the work of the joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group for Ballast Water Management Convention Exemptions (HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST). In particular, a proposal drafting process for the EU LIFE call 2014 was initiated by the HELCOM Secretariat following consideration of the Fourth Meeting of the HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST and agreement from the HELCOM Heads of Delegations on HELCOM participation as a partner in the project application. The aim of the project proposal was to create a joint project to conduct the necessary initial port surveys according to the HELCOM/OSPAR joint harmonized procedure. After initial email exchanges led by the HELCOM Secretariat the coordination of the project application was taken over by Puertos del Estado (Spain). During summer-autumn 2014 the final proposal was prepared under the lead by Puertos del Estado and supported by the HELCOM Secretariat. The application entitled "Tackling invasive alien species introduced by maritime navigation through discharge of ballast waters" was submitted under the LIFE Nature and Biodiversity priority action on 15 October 2014;
- additionally supported activities conducted by WP 4 on alien species as part of the HELCOM BALSAM project;
- drafted the HELCOM publication [Guide to Alien Species and Ballast Water Management in the Baltic Sea](#), with input from the experts from HELCOM member states. The document was presented to HELCOM MARITIME 13-2013 where it was considered and approved in principle based on some suggested changes to be implemented by the Secretariat. The finalised document was presented at HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 4-2014;

- produced its final report compiling all the activities conducted during the lifetime of the project. The report, [HELCOM ALIENS 3 – Tests of the Harmonized Approach to Ballast Water Management Exemptions in the Baltic Sea](#), was released on 15 July 2014 after being circulated intersessionally to HELCOM MARITIME contacts for approval on 8 July 2014.

7. Establishment of a European Red List of Habitats (EU Red List), 2014

Project Researcher/Working Group Lead: Ms. Janica Borg, HELCOM Secretariat

Based on the agreement made by HELCOM HOD 45-2014 the Baltic Sea Working Group of the EU-project “Establishment of a European Red List of Habitats” was coordinated from the HELCOM Secretariat from April to November 2014. The main aim of the whole project is to provide reliable and timely information on the status and trends of biodiversity across Europe to support the needs of the 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy. This includes assessing Red List status for marine and terrestrial habitats and at two geographic levels, EU and Pan-European. Four marine regions will be assessed; Baltic Sea, North Sea/NE-Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. The project is still ongoing in other regional seas, even though the Baltic Sea sub-project is finished.

The Baltic Sea Working Group consisted of seven Members from four HELCOM Contracting Parties, and the Working Group Lead from the HELCOM Secretariat. The main task of the Baltic Sea Working Group was to feed in the results gained from the HELCOM RED LIST project, based on the unified classification system HELCOM Underwater Biotope and habitat classification (HELCOM HUB, BSEP 139) and the Red List assessment of the Baltic Sea biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes (BSEP 138). The Working Group worked mainly via e-mail, Skype and the HELCOM Meeting Portal, and met for a three-day workshop, held at the HELCOM Secretariat on 28-30 October 2014.

HELCOM’s contribution to this EU-project ensured that the recently finished assessments and habitat classifications carried out in the Red List project were taken up at the European level. A final European assessment workshop scheduled for early 2016 will be used to collate the data from each regional sea and put it into a European context. The final project outcomes will be online habitat fact sheets, two publications, two posters and a final report, which are scheduled to be ready by mid-2016.

8. Baltwise MSP Seed Money project, 2014

Project Coordinator: Mr. Riku Varjopuro, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)

The HELCOM Secretariat has during January-December 2014 been involved as a partner in the EUSBSR Seed Money project BALTWISE in the field of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). The goal of BALTWISE has been to enable planning of a larger project on MSP with HELCOM involvement and prepare a project application to be submitted for future funding.

The other members of the project in addition to SYKE and HELCOM are the University of Turku, the Marine Institute of the University of Tartu, the Maritime Institute in Gdansk, the University of Eastern Finland and the Research and Design Institute of Urban Development (NIP Gradostroitelstva).

As a result of BALTWISE, a HELCOM work package for a project application draft has been developed through two meetings/workshops as well as during day to day work.

The HELCOM work package will be part of a forthcoming application to the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme called “Baltic Lines” coordinated by BSH/Germany.