



Document title	Progress of work of the HELCOM subsidiary bodies, as well as expert and correspondence groups during 2017
Code	3-8
Category	INF
Agenda Item	3 - Matters arising from the subsidiary bodies
Submission date	27.02.2018
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

Background

This document contains an outline of the main activities and outcomes of the various HELCOM subsidiary bodies as well as expert and correspondence groups, including also information on the progress in implementing the working programmes. These outcomes cover the intersessional period since the previous annual meeting of the Commission. They have been presented at the meetings of HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

Please note that more information on all HELCOM projects can be found in document 3-9.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and take note of the information.

HELCOM Group for Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR)

Chair: Ms. Heike Imhoff, Germany

The 16th meeting of HELCOM GEAR was held in Helsinki, Finland, 23-24 May 2017, the seventeenth meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden, 23-24 November 2017. In addition an extra online ad hoc meeting of was held on 11 September 2017, focusing on regional or sub-regional level cooperation with regard to the recent European developments.

During 2017 HELCOM GEAR focused on contributing to the finalization of the first version of the HELCOM [State of the Baltic Sea report](#) as well as coordination related to the implementation of the ecosystem approach and related policies, including among the Contracting Parties being EU member states on the revised Commission Decision on good environmental status.

The eighteenth meeting of HELCOM GEAR will be held in Berlin, Germany, 16-17 April 2018.

Strategic guidance of projects

[Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea](#) (HOLAS II 2014-2018)

Expert groups under GEAR

HELCOM expert network on economic and social analyses (EN-ESA)

Chair: Ms. Soile Oinonen, Finland

The network meets as needed and the aim is to meet annually to develop the economic and social analyses for the Baltic Sea Region. The intersessional work is continued through correspondence and teleconferences. In 2017, the network convened in HELCOM workshop on economic and social analyses supported by the EU-funded SPICE project in Riga, Latvia, 1 November 2017 and in HOLAS II ESA workshop in Stockholm, Sweden, 31 March 2017. Information exchange with other Regional Sea Conventions took place in joint HELCOM – BONUS BALTICAPP workshop held in Stockholm, Sweden, 29-30 March 2017 as well as at the Riga meeting. The work in year 2017 has focused on providing the results of the regional use of marine waters and cost of degradation analysis for the HELCOM 'State of the Baltic Sea' (HOLAS II) summary and supplementary reports, as well as developing an approach for the ecosystem services, baseline scenario and integrating economics into the assessment of activities, pressures, state and impacts. Preparing a data call to support the update of the HELCOM 'State of the Baltic Sea' (HOLAS II) report was initiated.

HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State&Conservation)

Co-Chairs: Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, and Mr. Urmas Lips, Estonia

Vice-Co-Chairs: Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, and Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Finland

The sixth meeting of HELCOM State and Conservation was convened on 15-19 May 2017 in Uppsala, Sweden and the seventh meeting was held on 23-27 October 2017 in Sopot, Poland. In addition to the biannual meeting the nature conservation theme convened a back-to-back workshop to plan for the next red list assessment 15-16 May 2017, and an intersessional approval process for topics related to the updated version of the State of the Baltic Sea report ran from the early January until 16 February 2018. During the meeting a sessional subgroup was also formed to collect feedback on the work of the HELCOM FISH group on an inventory of data needs for assessing incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes to support HELCOM indicator assessment work.

During 2017 the work under State&Conservation has focused on the publication of the first version of the state of the Baltic Sea report, the associated indicator reports, and the subsequent updating procedure for the reports. The conservation related topics included the next steps for the Red list assessment, MPA work and how to proceed with identifying threatened species or biotopes for which it could be suitable to consider joint measures or coordinated measures. The monitoring issues have focused on reviewing and finalizing monitoring guidelines and monitoring manual, updating of Recommendation 19/3 as well as discussed data issues related with the updating of core indicators and 'State of the Baltic Sea' report.

The next meeting State and Conservation meeting (HELCOM STATE&CONSERVATION 8/2018) has been scheduled for 14-18 May 2018, in Vilnius, Lithuania (venue to be confirmed) and STATE&CONSERVATION 9/2018 has been scheduled for 22-26 October 2018, preliminarily to be held in Denmark.

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendations under State and Conservation have been revised in 2017 for adoption at HELCOM 39-2018:

- HELCOM Recommendation 15/1 'Protection of the coastal strip';
- HELCOM Recommendation 19/3 on 'The Manual for the Marine Monitoring in the Combine Programme of HELCOM';
- HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 'Implementation of Integrated Marine and Coastal Management of Human Activities in the Baltic Sea Area'.

Reports and other deliverables

- BSEP 149 "Pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment of the Baltic Sea region - A status report" (jointly with Pressure WG);
- [State of the Baltic Sea report](#): the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea, first version;
- The majority of the annual [HELCOM Baltic Sea Environmental fact sheets](#) have been updated by the responsible institutes in the HELCOM countries;
- guidelines on sampling and determination of:
 - ✓ [total nitrogen](#)
 - ✓ [total phosphorus](#)
 - ✓ [ammonium](#)
 - ✓ [nitrate](#)
 - ✓ [nitrite](#)
 - ✓ [phosphate](#)
 - ✓ [silicate](#)
 - ✓ [total alkalinity](#)
 - ✓ [water transparency \(Secchi depth\)](#)
 - ✓ [hydrogen sulphide](#)
 - ✓ [pH in seawater](#)
- monitoring guidelines for biota concerning:
 - ✓ [phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass](#)
 - ✓ [reproductive status of seals](#)
 - ✓ [extended Rapid Assessment Survey for non-indigenous species](#)
 - ✓ [mesozooplankton](#)

Scientific-technical guidance of projects

- [Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea](#) (HOLAS II), 2014-2018;
- Project [Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea](#) (HELCOM PEG), quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea (PEG QA), 2017-2019;
- [Zooplankton Indicator Integration to Monitoring in the Baltic Sea \(ZEN ZIIM\)](#), 2015-2017;
- [Continuation of the project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management](#) (HELCOM FISH-PRO II), 2013-2018;
- [Development of HELCOM tools and approaches for the Second Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea](#) (TAPAS) 2016-2017, co-funded by EU (finished);
- [Implementation and development of key components for the assessment of Status, Pressures and Impacts, and Social and Economic evaluation in the Baltic Sea marine region](#) (SPICE), 2017, co-funded by EU (finished).

Expert groups under State&Conservation

Expert Network on hazardous substances (EN-HZ)

Co-Chairs: Ms. Sara Danielsson and Ms. Elisabeth Nyberg, Sweden

The group meets frequently online and physically to continue with indicator work, integrated assessment of hazardous substances work and preparation and revision of monitoring guidelines. Some intersessional work has also been carried out clarify specific issues such as monitoring guidelines, supplementary reports and details of the extraction tables for the HELCOM indicators. Three meetings were held during 2017. Major topics covered in recent meetings include the development of HELCOM indicators, defining the parameters vital for indicator data, developing methods for handling data (full and initial), the integrated assessment of hazardous substances and the State of the Baltic Sea supplementary report for hazardous substances. An extensive amount of intersessional was done at the end of 2017 to improve the indicator evaluations, in close association with the OSPAR MIME script developer.

Intersessional Network on benthic habitat monitoring (IN-Benth)

Chair: Mr.Georg Martin, Estonia

The main aim of the work of the group is to support the regional development of monitoring methods for benthic habitats. The group works intersessionally through correspondence between the meetings of the State and Conservation working group meetings. Physical meetings are arranged as needed. No meetings were held in 2017.

Intersessional Network on Eutrophication (IN-Eutrophication)

Chair: Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen (Finland)

In Eutrophication serves as a discussion platform and operational group producing eutrophication assessments. The main aim of the work of the group is to develop and produce eutrophication indicators. The group held three online meetings and on physical meeting in 2017 mainly focusing on input to HOLAS II.

HELCOM-OSPAR-ICES Joint Working Group on seabirds (JWG BIRD)

HELCOM Co- Chair: Mr. Volker Dierschke, Germany

The group meets annually and also works intersessionally through correspondence. The latest meeting took place in Riga, Latvia, 6–10 November 2017. The topics the group works on during the annual meetings are agreed jointly by HELCOM, OSPAR and ICES. In 2017 this has included the development of common bird indicators clarifying the parameters required for assessment of breeding birds and to provide suitable reference for monitoring of breeding, as well as developing a common understanding on what the EU Birds

Directive means in terms of obligations related to the HELCOM Red List and also the uncertainties regarding on-going bird conservation work at the EU level.

Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea (MORS EG)

Chair: Ms. Tamara Zalewska, Poland

The group works with monitoring of radioactive substances in accordance with HELCOM Recommendation 26/3 and making assessments of the impacts of radioactivity on the marine environment and humans. In 2017 the group has worked on finalizing the thematic assessment on radioactivity 2011-2015 for publication. The latest meeting took place in 2- 4 May 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Ad hoc Seal Expert Group (Seal)

Chair: Anders Galatius, Denmark

Vice-Chair: Morten Tange Olsen, Denmark

The 11th meeting of the Seal expert group was held in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 4-7 October 2017. The main focus of work of the expert group during 2017 was on contribution to the first report of the second holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II), development and update of core indicators for seals, as well as the evaluation of Recommendation 27/28-2 'Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area'. The next meeting of the expert group will be held on 10-13 October 2018, tentatively in Estonia.

HELCOM Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (Pressure)

Chair: Mr. Lars Sonesten, Sweden

The sixth meeting of the Pressure Working Group was convened on 25-27 April 2017 in St. Petersburg, Russia and the seventh meeting was held on 24-26 October 2017 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

During 2017 the work of the Pressure Working Group has focused on the follow-up of the implementation of the HELCOM nutrient input reduction scheme and related products of the PLC-6 project as well as matters related to marine litter, underwater noise, hazardous substances, and physical damage to the seafloor.

The next meeting of the group (PRESSURE 8-2018) will be held on 18-20 April 2018 in Berlin, Germany and PRESSURE 9-2018 has tentatively been scheduled for 8-12 October 2018.

HELCOM Recommendations

- HELCOM Recommendation 38-1 "Sewage sludge handling"

Reports and other deliverables

BSEP 149 "Pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment of the Baltic Sea region - A status report" (jointly with State&Conservation WG);

BSEP in press "Changes in major nutrient sources and pathways to the Baltic Sea, between 1995 and 2014".

Follow up on the implementation of the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme including:

- Update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input;
- The policy message on the evaluation of progress towards national nutrient input targets (submitted for approval at HELCOM 39-2018);
- Methodological documents for the assessment of nutrient inputs, including statistical methods, reallocation of extra reduction.

Follow up on the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

Projects

- [Sixth Pollution load compilation \(PLC-6\) 2013-2018;](#)
- [Seventh Pollution load compilation \(PLC-7\) 2017-2020;](#)
- HELCOM Project on operationalization of the nutrient reduction scheme follow-up system (MAI CART OPER) 2015-2017;
- Estimation of reductions of atmospheric nitrogen deposition achievable by implementing the Gothenburg Protocol/EU-NEC Directive (2017).

Expert/correspondence groups under Pressure**[Expert Network on Underwater Noise \(EN-Noise\)](#)****Chair: Mr. Peter Sigray, Sweden**

The network met four times during 2017 (two physically and two on-line), reporting back to Pressure Working Group on their activities. The network also held a joint session with OSPAR ICG-Noise in October 2017. During 2017 the network has focused on the development of underwater noise indicators, a proposal for regional monitoring sub-programme as well as monitoring guidelines of continuous noise, the identification of further development needs of the HELCOM/OSPAR register of impulsive events, drafting a report on noise sensitivity of aquatic animals in the Baltic Sea and, HELCOM input to the process of establishing environmental targets for underwater noise, and the drafting of the noise section of the State of the Baltic Sea report.

[Expert Network on Marine Litter \(EN-Marine Litter\)](#)**Chair: None**

The network met four times during 2017 (all on-line), reporting back to Pressure Working Group on their activities related to the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP ML), and to State and Conservation Working Group on monitoring issues. During 2017 the network has focused on the development of marine litter indicators, a proposal for a beach litter monitoring guidelines, the provision of guidance and follow up on the activities on marine litter within the SPICE project (on beach litter, litter on the seafloor and microlitter), and the drafting of the marine litter section of the State of the Baltic Sea report. Additionally, national experts contributed to the implementation of the RAP ML, which was the focus of the workshop held on 23 October 2017 back to back with PRESSURE 7-2017 held on 24-26 October.

[Reduction Scheme Core Drafting Group \(RedCore DG\)](#)**Chair: Lars M. Svendsen, Denmark**

RedCore DG met seven times during 2017 (four physically and three online) mainly back-to-back with PLC-6 or PLC-7 project meetings.

RedCore group has provided the following scientific advises to PRESSURE group:

- Methodology to evaluate progress towards national reduction targets;
- Methodology for reallocation of extra reduction;
- Policy message on progress towards national reduction targets with supplementary paper;
- Concept note for the PLC-7 project proposal;

and other methodological aspects of assessment of input of nutrients into the Baltic Sea.

[Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals \(CG PHARMA\)](#)

The group had two online meetings in 2017. The group focused on elaboration of the HELCOM indicator on diclophenac and its utilization for the purposes of the Second holistic assessment of environmental health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II). The group also worked on organization of collection and compilation of data on the use of pharmaceuticals in veterinary.

Expert Network on Dredging/Depositing Operations at sea (EN DREDS)

The group had one online meeting and elaborated the following documents:

- Suggestions on the method to evaluate effects of dredging and depositing of dredged material on the sea floor for the use in the BSII of HOLAS II assessment.

HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri)

Chair: Ms. Tarja Haaranen, Finland

The Agri group held its 4th Meeting on 3-4 April 2017 in Brussels and 5th Meeting on 9-10 November in Helsinki. During 2017, the group also participated in organizing the HELCOM Workshop on nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea countries on 27-28 March in Berlin, Germany. In addition to the workshop, the group worked to enhance nutrient recycling by compiling information on nutrient flows in the region and finalizing the Overview of nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea countries for publishing. The group agreed on the scope of the revision of Annex III part II of the Helsinki Convention and submitted it to HOD 53-2017 for adoption. The group also agreed that the Recommendation 24/3 is outdated and requires revision and will consider its revision in AGRI 6-2018. Advances in nutrient accounting at farm level and national manure standards were followed up in the meetings. Also, the implementation of palette of measures was tracked with a questionnaire.

Projects

Advanced manure standards for sustainable nutrient management and reduced emissions (Manure Standards), 2017-2019

HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish)

Chair: Ms. Marianne Goffeng Raakil, Sweden

The following meetings have been held: Sixth Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 6-2017), 22-24 May 2017, Helsinki, Finland, and the Seventh Meeting of HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 7-2017) was held on 14-15 November 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The next meeting of HELCOM FISH (HELCOM FISH 8-2018) will be held 23-24 May 2018 in Warsaw, Poland.

In 2017 the Fish Group has focused especially on:

HELCOM fisheries data interests

HELCOM Fish has considered HELCOM data interests to assess incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes with dedicated online meeting (FISH Data interests 1-2017, 29 September 2017) and establishing a correspondence group on the topic with a workshop on the same issue scheduled for 27-28 February 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Cooperation between Fisheries & Environment organisations

The group has worked for closer regional cooperation between Fisheries & Environment issues in the Baltic Sea region, including cooperation between HELCOM, BALTFISH and other relevant organisations. The work is following up the roadmap on the same issue agreed by HOD 51-2016 as regional follow-up of the CBD Sustainable Ocean Initiative meeting 26-28 September 2016 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Regular information exchange with BALTFISH was agreed at HELCOM FISH 7-2017.

Migratory Fish species, especially sea trout and eel

Migratory fish species, with dedicated workshops organised on river restoration as well as eel (see below), updating of a report with national information on status of salmon and sea trout rivers in the Baltic Sea and HELCOM involvement in a dedicated Interreg project RETROUT on sea trout (see below).

Other issues of special interest

The group has worked on a compilation of experiences and trials with alternative, more environmentally friendly fishing gears and submitted a draft compilation to Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BS AC) for further input and cooperation.

Projects

The EU-funded RETROUT project “Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination” (2017-2020), HELCOM project staff Mr. Mika Rahikainen starting March 2018)

[Expert/correspondence groups under Fish](#)**[Task Force on Migratory Fish species \(FISH-M\)](#)**

Chair: *(No Standing Chair)*

The group has recently worked in workshop format, two of which were organized in 2017:

Workshop on river restauration and best practices in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM FISH-M 4-2017)

The workshop was organised 29-30 May 2017 in Bredsten, Denmark, moderated by Janne Palomino Dalby and Anja Gadgård Boye, Denmark. The workshop shared information on Baltic Sea countries’ national activities in the field of river restauration and related best practices.

Regional Workshop on Eel and the Baltic Sea (FISH-M 5 -2017)

The Workshop was organised 29 November – 1 December 2017 in Stockholm, Sweden, moderated by Willem Dekker, Sweden. The event shared information on international, regional, and national processes on eel assessment and management that are relevant for the Baltic Sea. Based on this similarities, differences, challenges, and opportunities for next steps were discussed. The workshop concluded with a proposal to develop a joint regional project on eel. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC), and with presentations from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the EU Commission and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC). The Workshop was hosted by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SWAM) with the Swedish University of Agriculture (SLU).

A workshop is planned for summer 2018 with a focus on Sea trout and organised in cooperation with the RETROUT project.

[Correspondence Group concerning a draft document on BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region \(CG Aquaculture\)](#)

Chair: *(No Standing Chair)*

The first meeting of CG Aquaculture was held 26 September in Helsinki which drafted and agreed on a detailed work plan 2018-19 and divided tasks (Sweden leading work on compiling national BAT/BEP definitions). The work has not progressed with a full scope as planned due to lack of resources within CPs and despite several attempts to secure funding by the Secretariat. Sweden has committed to leading work on compiling BAT/BEP definitions. The group will convene next time in June 2018 to a workshop on aquaculture (CG Aquaculture 2-2018) to be organized in Mariehamn, Åland.

[HELCOM Maritime Working Group \(HELCOM MARITIME\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Anna Petersson, Sweden

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Jorma Kämäräinen, Finland, and Ms. Natalia Kutaeva, Russia

The 17th Meeting of the HELCOM Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 17-2017) was held on 10-12 October 2017, St. Petersburg, Russia

The next meeting (HELCOM MARITIME 18/2018) will be held 25-27 September 2018 in Hamburg, Germany.

In 2017 the Maritime Group has focused especially on:

Air Pollution from Ships

A major milestone on airborne emissions from ships in the Baltic Sea was reached in 2017 as IMO MEPC 70 agreed to the proposals to designate the North Sea and the Baltic Sea as emission control areas for NO_x Tier III control with an effective date of 1 January 2021 as well as that the final amendments were adopted by MEPC 71 (3-7 July 2017). As the new NECA regulation is only addressing new ships, work is ongoing to catalyse the voluntary use of environmentally friendly ship technology, including alternative fuels. For this the dedicated expert group HELCOM GREEN TEAM (see below) has intensified its work with, i.a. ongoing revision of HELCOM Rec. 28E/13 "Introducing economic incentives as a complement to existing regulations to reduce emissions from ships" (originally adopted in 2007). As previous years, Finland submitted a report on airborne emissions from ships in 2016.

Alien Species and regional implementation of the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention

Ballast water was an important topic within HELCOM MARITIME in 2017 due to the entry into force of the 2004 IMO Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) on 8 September 2017. The work on BWMC exemptions progressed within the HELCOM-OSPAR TG BALLAST (see below) with a revised website for the Joint Harmonized Procedure (JHP) tool released in August 2017. TG BALLAST is collecting revision proposals for further updates of the JHP foreseen in 2020. HELCOM is involvement as a partner in a dedicated interreg project COMPLETE (2017-2020) will provide resources for further substantial work on reducing non-invasive species introductions via ships during the coming years, in relation to ballast water -but also hull fouling.

Sewage from ships and port reception facilities

With the conclusion of the amendments to MARPOL Annex IV regarding the Baltic Sea Special Area at IMO in 2016, HELCOM has continued efforts to catalyse further improvements in the sewage port reception capacities in the Baltic Sea passenger ports. The Contracting Parties and Observer organisations have provided updates to the HELCOM overview of sewage port reception facilities published in 2015. Maritime has endorsed and HODs have agreed to the submitting an updated overview to IMO MEPC 73 (autumn 2018) as an information document. Germany is working on drafting a report on best practices in sewage PRFs and use of these facilities. The HELCOM Cooperation Platform on Special Area According to MARPOL Annex IV (CP PRF) convened to a meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in 13 September 2017. Maritime 17 2017 updated the work plan of CP PRF for 2016-2018.

Safety of Navigation

During 2017 the group approved a revision to HELCOM Recommendation 34E/2 "Further testing and developing the concept of pro-active route planning as well as other e - navigation solutions to enhance safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Region" prepared by HELCOM SAFE NAV.

The group discussed progress in implementing the joint BSHC -HELCOM Harmonised re-survey Scheme 2013 for the Baltic Sea, adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2013 and endorsed the presented future actions and encouraged the Contracting Parties to participate in EU INEA CEF Motorways of the Sea, DG REGIO Interreg and Cohesion funding programs to ensure the resources for hydrographic surveys in order to meet the Re-Survey Scheme timetables agreed by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2013.

HELCOM Maritime Assessment

The drafting of the HELCOM Maritime Assessment was concluded in 2017 and the final draft was approved for publishing by HELCOM HOD 53-2017. This comprehensive overview on maritime activities in the Baltic Sea as well as the related datasets on maritime traffic, fisheries and other activities will be released in early 2018.

Other issues of special relevance

Upon the initiation by IMO and based on the HELCOM HOD decision in 2017, HELCOM has joined the proposed UNDP/GEF/IMO Glofouling Partnership as a strategic partner.

The HELCOM Maritime Working Group was awarded the Baltic Sea Fund Prize 2017 for its work to reduce pollution from maritime traffic in the Baltic Sea. According to the Baltic Sea Fund the HELCOM Working Group has through persistent long-term work successfully acted as a catalyst to bring about international agreements for the benefit of the Baltic Sea environment. The latest achievements of the Group, highlighted by the award, include the ban of sewage discharges to international waters of the Baltic Sea and the designation of the Baltic Sea as a special area for nitrogen oxide emissions from ships exhaust gases (NECA). Both these major developments were decided by International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 2016 based on proposals developed within the Group.

The group has considered fertilizer cargo handling in the Baltic Sea and agreed that there is a need for more information to be collected by an official data request/questionnaire during spring 2018 and discussed during Maritime 18 -2018.

The Group decided to discontinue *the* Correspondence Group on updating of HELCOM Recommendation 19/14 on a harmonized system of fines in case a ship violates anti-pollution regulations (CG FINES), the Correspondence Group to revise HELCOM Recommendation 28/3 on "Guidelines on bunkering operations and ship to ship cargo transfer of oils, subject to Annex I of MARPOL 73/78, in the Baltic Sea Area" (CG STS) and the Correspondence Group on Ballast Water Management (CG BALLAST) due to lack of resources in the lead countries. The work will either continue in other forms (CG BALLAST, CG STS) or postponed to a future, more mature, date (CG STS).

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendation under MARITIME have been revised in 2017 for adoption at HELCOM 39-2018:

- Recommendation 34E/2 "Further testing and developing the concept of pro-active route planning as well as other e - navigation solutions to enhance safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Region" (Lead Sweden);
- Recommendation 19/10 "Application by the Baltic Sea States of guidelines for holding tanks/oily water separating or filtering equipment for ships of less than 400 tons gross tonnage";
- Recommendation 10/11 "International co-operation on liability for damage resulting from vessel-based pollution".

The following HELCOM Recommendations have been agreed to be withdrawn (pending the decision by HELCOM 39-2018):

- Recommendation 2/2 "Recommendation on the Acceptance by the Baltic Sea States of International Instruments on Maritime Safety, Pollution Prevention and Related Matters";
- Recommendation 21/2 "Amendments to Annex IV "Prevention of pollution from ships" of the 1992 Helsinki Convention";
- Recommendation 22E/5 "Amendments to Annex IV "Prevention of pollution from ships" to the Helsinki Convention";
- Recommendation 24/8 "Amendments to Annex IV "Prevention of pollution from ships" to the Helsinki Convention, concerning discharge of sewage".

Reports and Other deliverables

- HELCOM Maritime Assessment (to be published 2018);
- Revised HELCOM 2017 update to the Overview on Port Reception Facilities (PRF) (to be published 2018);
- Revised Baltic Sea Clean Shipping Guide - revised 2017 edition (to be published 2018).

Projects

- Environmental Impact of Low Emission Shipping: Measurements and Modelling Strategies - studying technical efficiency and socio-economic impacts of clean shipping solutions (EnviSuM), EU co-funded, (March 2016–February 2019);
- Completing management options in the Baltic Sea Region to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping (COMPLETE), EU co-funded, 2017-2020.

Expert groups under MARITIME

Sub-group on Green Technology and Alternative Fuels for Shipping (GREEN TEAM)

Co-Chairs: Ms.Anita Mäkinen, Finland, and Ms.Anna Petersson, Sweden

The First Meeting of the Sub-group on Green Technology and Alternative Fuels for Shipping (GREEN TEAM 1-2017) was organized 5 September 2017 on the island of Donsö, Gothenburg archipelago, Sweden, and included a joint session with the CBSS EGEMP. The Meeting shared information on alternative fuels and green ship technology in the Baltic Sea region, strengthened cooperation with CBSS on alternative fuels, initiated a revision of HELCOM Rec. 28E/13 under the lead of Sweden and updated its work plan.

The next meeting of the group (GREEN TEAM 2-2018) will take place 17 May 2018 in Turku, Finland, and the following meeting (GREEN TEAM 3-2019) will be organized during the Donsö Shipping Meet (Donsö, Sweden) 3-4 September 2019 in Donsö.

Expert Working Group for Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS & data (AIS EWG)

Chair: Mr. Alar Siht, Estonia

The 28th Meeting of the Expert Working Group for Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS & Data (HELCOM AIS EWG 28-2017) was organised 7-8 June 2017 in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Meeting shared information on national developments related to AIS, drafted a proposal for the revision to HELCOM Recommendation 34E/2 "Further testing and developing the concept of pro-active route planning as well as other e - navigation solutions to enhance safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Region", considered revision needs to the Recommendation 33/1 "Unified interpretation in relation to access to and use of HELCOM AIS" as a result to the server move from Denmark to Norway, considered developments related to the increasing interest in the use of HELCOM AIS data and took note of other developments including EMSA activities and the R-mode Baltic project paving way for deployment of autonomous ships.

In addition to the regular meeting the group organised a Seminar on the use of AIS data on 5 May 2017 in Helsinki, Finland (Secretariat). The Seminar gathered HELCOM AIS data users from the region to share best practice on use of data and collect views on further developments related to data access.

The next meeting (HELCOM AIS EWG 29-2018) will be held 12-13 June 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV)

Chair: Mr. Andreas Holmgren, Sweden

The Eighth Meeting of the HELCOM Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV 8-2017) was held on 28 September 2017 in Stockholm-Arlanda, Sweden.

The meeting drafted a proposal for the revision to HELCOM Recommendation 34E/2 "Further testing and developing the concept of pro-active route planning as well as other e - navigation solutions to enhance safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Region".

The next meeting (SAFE NAV 9-2018) will be held in Helsinki (Secretariat), Finland or alternatively in Denmark if DMA is interested to host the meeting in September 2018.

[HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention Exemptions \(HELCOM /OSPAR TG BALLAST\)](#)

Co-Chairs: Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany, and Mr. Henrik Ramstedt, Sweden

The eighth meeting of the group (HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 8-2017) was held in Helsinki, Finland, 16 -17 November 2017.

The Group has conducted a compilation of revision and review needs of the JHP to ease the foreseen revisions in 2020-21 and shared information on port sampling activities conducted and planned nationally (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Spain and Sweden), including new techniques trials (i.a. e-DNA barcoding method).

Intersessional correspondence work takes place under the lead of the Co-Chairs. Intersessional email correspondence on target species for the purposes of the HELCOM/OSPAR JHP takes place within the HELCOM Correspondence Group on Target Species. The online JHP decision support tool has been updated with modernised interface, incorporating separate HELCOM and OSPAR target species lists and general improvements to usability.

The Meeting drafted Terms of Reference for continued work of the Group for 2017-2020 in the Second meeting during the period 2013-2014. The new ToRs were adopted by HELCOM and OSPAR. The work plan for coming years was agreed during HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 8-2017.

After the adoption of the Guidelines by HELCOM and OSPAR the group focused on work plan for coming years and on discussions around the implementation of the Guidelines.

Additionally, the Group is to provide input to the activities of the COMPLETE Project (see above) , especially in relation to the TS selection criteria and risk assessment under the JHP and further development of the risk assessment tool.

The next meeting of the TG is envisaged to be held on November 2018 hosted by an OSPAR Contracting Party (exact dates tbc).

[Cooperation Platform on Special Area According to MARPOL Annex IV \(CP PRF\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany

In 2017 the CP PRF convened to a meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in 13 September 2017 hosted by BSH. The Meeting shared information on sewage PRF developments in the Baltic Sea countries and related input from participants, considered update of the HELCOM overview on sewage PRFs in the region as well as the preparation of the sewage PRF best practices report by Germany as well as took note of the update plans on the CP work plan.

The next meeting of the CP is foreseen to be organized in 2018.

[HELCOM Response Working Group \(HELCOM RESPONSE\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Finland

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Ojars Gerke, Latvia, and Mr. Alexander von Buxhoeveden, Sweden

The 23rd meeting of HELCOM RESPONSE was held in Helsinki, Finland, 14-16 June 2017.

The 24th meeting will be held on 10-12 April 2018 in Klaipeda, Lithuania and the 25th meeting will be held 14-16 November 2018 in Rostock, Germany.

[Response Operations](#)

In 2017 the Contracting Parties shared information on response operations.

Target spills and Response objectives

The group has worked on definitions for adequate sub-regional response capacity and related target spills. For this purpose the group re-established at RESPONSE 23 the Correspondence Group on the revision of Recommendation 28E/12 under the lead of Denmark, with aims to submit proposal for RESPONSE 24- 2018. The work will focus on creating a joint understanding and definition of target spills/response objectives and for this purpose compile a more in-depth analysis of use of the concepts in the Baltic Sea coastal countries. Terminology used to dimension national response capacity will also be covered.

Response Exercises including evaluation

The Group has worked on optimising the utility of HELCOM response exercises by drafting and agreeing on a HELCOM Response Exercise Plan and updated terms of reference for the HELCOM Exercise Evaluation Team (EET).

The annual HELCOM BALEX DELTA 2017 operational pollution response exercise was conducted by Russia on August 8-10 2017 near Kaliningrad, in territorial sea of Russian Federation, the area of platform C-9 (LUKOIL-Kaliningradmorneft' Ltd.) and was organized by the Marine Rescue Service of Rosmorrechflot (MRS).

The group has been involved in planning of the BALEX DELTA 2018 exercise in Sweden, supported by a dedicated EU project with HELCOM involvement as a partner.

Response capacity developments

In 2017 the Group has taken note of information on deliveries and plans for new response capacity in the Contracting Parties.

Revision of HELCOM Response Manuals

The Group has considered comprehensive revision of the HELCOM Response Manual volumes I-III. The current manual Vol. I has grown over the years and a streamlining of the material could improve readability. The Vol. II on responding to spills of hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) has been in the need of revision for some time and the group has concluded that it is best to carry this work in cooperation with other regional organisations. SHORE network is working on developing the recently adopted Vol. III further. The aim is to consider revision again at RESPONSE 24 in Klaipeda.

The Meeting supported the recommendation of the Task Group on revising the HELCOM Response Manual Volume II (TG HNS MANUAL 5-2017) of a joint application to the DG ECHO Call 2018, if eligible, with the Baltic Sea (HELCOM), Mediterranean (REMPEC), North Sea (BONN) as well as possibly also other regional secretariats as well as member state institutions as project partners.

Recommendations

Revised HELCOM Recommendation 36/3 "Marine pollution incident reporting and requests for assistance between Contracting Parties in the Baltic Sea area" will be submitted to HELCOM 39-2018 for adoption.

Reports and other deliverables

Status of the national OWR plans 2016 (published 2017);

Endorsed publication of Report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2016 (published 2017).

Expert groups under RESPONSE**Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance (IWGAS)**

Chair: Mr. Fredrik Lindblom, Sweden

In 2017 the annual meeting of HELCOM IWGAS was held in Stockholm/Arlanda Airport on 11-12 May.

The Group has compiled the annual report on spills observed via aerial surveillance, shared information on aerial surveillance developments and the planning of Coordinated Extended Pollution Control Operation (CEPCO) flights including the recent difficulties in hosting HELCOM CEPCOs.

The 2018 IWGAS meeting will take place 22-23 March 2018 in Skavsta Stockholm Airport, Sweden.

[Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore \(SHORE network\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik, Estonia

The first meeting of the HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE network 1-2017) was held on 16 October 2017 in Helsinki, Finland.

The Group shared information on national and regional developments of the relevance to SHORE network and provided comments to the revision of the HELCOM Response Manual Volume III (including streamlining with material in volume I). The Meeting tasked a drafting group including Estonia, Poland and the Secretariat to finalize the work plan and to make the first proposal for a revision of the exercise chapters of HELCOM Response Manual Volumes I and III.

Date or place for the next meeting of the group has not been set.

[Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response \(EWG OWR\)](#)

Chair: Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm

The seventh and eighth online meetings of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 7-2017 and EWG OWR 8- 2017) were held as online meetings on 25 January 2017 and 10 May 2017 respectively. 9th Meeting of the Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 9-2017) was held on 17-19 October 2017 in Helsinki. EWG OWR 10-2018 was held as an online meeting on 8 February 2018.

In addition two day seminar and training event (wildlife managers' course by Sea Alarm) was held prior to the meeting on 17-18 October 2017.

The Group has shared information on progress in the field of OWR and in updating the HELCOM OWR report published in 2017 on the status of the national OWR plans 2016 based on the oiled wildlife preparedness self-assessment tool (SAT).

EWG OWR 11-2018) will be held in end of May/beginning on June 2018 (date to be decided by correspondence).

[Task Group on revising the HELCOM Response Manual Volume II \(TG HNS MANUAL\)](#)

Chair: Mr. Ojars Gerke, Latvia

The fifth meeting of the Task Group on revising the HELCOM Response Manual Volume II (TG HNS MANUAL) was held as an online meeting on 29 March 2017.

In view of the limited resources available in the Contracting Parties for the revision work the group supported the idea of a joint application to the DG ECHO Call 2018, if eligible, with the Baltic Sea (HELCOM), Mediterranean (REMPEC), North Sea (BONN) as well as possibly also other regional secretariats as well as member state institutions as project partners.

The TG HNS manual was discontinued by RESPONSE 23-2017.

[Expert Group on environmental risks of hazardous submerged objects \(SUBMERGED\)](#)

Chairs: Mr. Jorma Rytönen, Finland, and Mr. Jens Sternheim, Germany

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Gunnar Möller, Sweden, and Mr. Claus Böttcher, Germany

SUBMERGED did not meet during 2017. A related parallel session to Baltic Sea Day covered submerged hazardous objects and explored cooperation with Russian partners.

The next meeting will take place during spring 2018 (place and date to be decided).

Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG)

Co-Chairs: Ms. Katarzyna Krzywda, Poland, and Mr. Joacim Johannesson, Sweden

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Kai Trümpler, Germany, and Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland

The mandate of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG was prolonged by HELCOM HOD 50-2016 (until 2021) and the 72nd VASAB CSPD/BSR Meeting (by 2019).

The Group has regular meetings twice a year; HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 14-2017 was held in Stockholm, Sweden (10–11 May) and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 15-2017 in Warsaw, Poland (7–8 November). The 15-2017 meeting was held back to back with the second international consultation meeting on the Draft Maritime Spatial Plan of Polish Sea Areas (6–7 November). The next meeting (16-2018) will take place in Helsinki, Finland on 8–9 May 2018 and will be held back to back with the first international consultation meeting on the Draft Maritime Spatial Plan of Finnish Sea Areas (7–8 May).

During 2017 the WG has followed up on national MSP developments including implementation of the joint MSP principles as well as on the implementation of the Baltic MSP Roadmap (2013-2020). The work has continued on creation and sharing of MSP relevant Baltic Sea regional datasets. Another topic was facilitating and following-up on the application of the “Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in MSP”, particularly, introduction of the concepts of green infrastructure and blue corridors as well as Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSA).

The group also acts as steering body for the Horizontal Action “Spatial Planning” of EU SBSR.

Projects

- [Coherent Linear Infrastructures in Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans “Baltic LINes” \(2016-2019\);](#)
- [HA Spatial Planning Support 2 \(2017-2018\);](#)
- Pan Baltic Scope (2018-2019).

Expert groups under HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG

Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group (BSR MSP Data ESG)

During 2017, the Group had three physical meetings. The first report of the group, summarising the main achievements in the period 2015-2017 was submitted to HELCOM-VASAB MSP 14-2017. The document defines the general structure of MSP data, provides information about currently available data sets which are agreed as most relevant in transboundary cooperation and consultations, identifies the list of data and information gaps and challenges, as well as indicates the further steps and vision of MSP data management in the Baltic Sea Region. Since that, the Group has continued working on document on technical recommendations for transboundary MSP output data as well as continuing the cataloguing on MSP data access points and specifications on visual guidelines used in MSP plans by Contracting Parties.