



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Helsinki Commission
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HELCOM 40-2019

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Agenda Item	2 - Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan
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Submitted by	Denmark
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Background

This document contains comments by Denmark on document 2-3 “Draft report on the progress in HELCOM voluntary commitments to the UN Ocean Conference 2017”.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the comments.

3. Identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea

The commitment is to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea. A regional workshop will be organized in 2018 for this purpose.

The EBSAs are expected to contribute to fulfilling the regional goal of drawing up and applying maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea region which are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach.

Marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea are taken into account in maritime spatial planning. The areal coverage of HELCOM Marine Protected Areas reached almost 12% of the Baltic Sea in 2016.

EBSA can provide further useful information that can be used for actions to safeguard the species and habitats in these areas including within spatial planning processes as may be decided individually or collectively by the countries concerned. Other potential benefits of EBSA are new possibilities for bilateral collaboration and protection of transboundary marine areas.

Identification of EBSAs will be done according to the established scientific criteria adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The EBSA workshop will be hosted by Finland and convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in cooperation with HELCOM.

Progress report

Overall status (cancelled/completed/financial issues/off track/on track)

Completed

Achievement at a glance (max 300 words)

The Baltic EBSA workshop was held on 20–24 February 2018, in Helsinki, Finland, hosted by Finland and with financial support by Finland and Sweden. The workshop was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in collaboration with HELCOM. The workshop was attended by experts from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Sweden, as well as from a number of organizations.

Nine EBSAs in the Baltic Sea were described by the workshop. Five of these areas are transboundary areas, covering waters of two or more countries. Altogether, the described EBSAs cover 23% of the Baltic Sea waters.

The report of the Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of EBSAs in the Baltic Sea (EBSA workshop) was reviewed at the CBD Twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 22), 2-7 July 2018 in Montreal. Subsequently the report was forwarded to the Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 14), 17-29 November 2018, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, where the identified areas was considered and the meeting requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to include the summary reports in the EBSA repository, and to submit them to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and its relevant processes, as well as Parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations.

Challenges faced in implementation (if any) (max 300 words)

Next steps (max 300 words)

The spatial information on the areas will be included in the HELCOM Map and Data services.

~~In the Baltic Sea Region, the results of the EBSA process provides important information which can be used in the national and transboundary Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes in the region, to fulfil the regional goal of drawing up and applying coherent transboundary maritime spatial plans which apply the ecosystem approach by 2020.~~ ~~In the Baltic Sea Region, the results of the EBSA process provides important information which can be used by the Baltic Sea countries to establish, by 2020¹, maritime spatial plans that are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach.~~

Commented [LOMU1]: Based on ministerial declaration from 2018, we suggest changing this paragraph to the following, new text is taken from the declaration.

It is also provides important information on green infrastructure features which can be used to support the conservation and increased resilience of biodiversity in the marine ecosystem, as well as improve its functioning while promoting ecosystem services. Access to the information [on the biological features](#) from the EBSA process [can](#) contribute to facilitating the implementation of the work of the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

It is also expected that the ~~information results on biological features from the EBSA process~~ can be used to contribute to other processes, such as the red listing of threatened species and biotopes, evaluation of effectiveness and coherence of Marine Protected Areas networks, and future HELCOM Holistic Assessments.

Beneficiaries & Actions

Who are the beneficiaries? (max 300 words)

HELCOM Contracting Parties who work to jointly implement national and transboundary measures in the region, including Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes and conservation efforts.

What specific actions have been taken to positively impact beneficiaries? (max 300 words)

Engagement of the Contracting Parties of the Convention in all HELCOM processes is a fundamental principle of the HELCOM work. The achievements and actions mentioned above have consequently all been undertaken together with, and guided by, the Contracting Parties in HELCOM, who are also the beneficiaries of this commitment. By involving all Baltic Sea States, as well as observer organizations (IGOs and NGOs), concrete measures can be taken in order to jointly meet the goals of the Convention and the Baltic Sea Action Plan: A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economies and social activities.

¹ [The corresponding deadline, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, in Directive 2014/89/EU establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning is 2021.](#)