



Document title	Progress of work of the HELCOM subsidiary bodies, as well as expert and correspondence groups during 2018
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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 3-18.

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 18th meeting of HELCOM GEAR was held on 16-17 April 2018 in Berlin, Germany, at the premises of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the 19th meeting 7-8 November 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark, at the premises of the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food. In addition an extra online ad hoc meeting of was held on 2 May 2018, which focused the development of a HELCOM coordinated project proposal to the call for projects to support cooperation needs of EU Member States in the second cycle implementation of the MSFD.

During 2018 HELCOM GEAR focused on contributing to the finalization of the first version of the HELCOM [State of the Baltic Sea report](#), the process to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan, 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 20th meeting of HELCOM GEAR will be held in Berlin, Germany, most probably on 15-18 May 2018.

Strategic guidance of projects

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

Actions to evaluate and identify effective measures to reach GES in the Baltic Sea marine region (HELCOM ACTION), 2019-2020

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 2018, the network convened in two HELCOM ESA network meetings in Helsinki, Finland, 14 March and 14 December 2018. The network also contributed to the workshop on the HOLAS II economic and social analyses in Helsinki, 13-14 March 2018, and was invited to participate in the Pan Baltic Scope workshop on economic and social analyses in maritime spatial planning in Helsinki, 13 December 2018. The work in year 2018 has focused on finalizing the results of the regional use of marine waters and cost of degradation analyses for the HELCOM 'State of the Baltic Sea' (HOLAS II) updated summary and supplementary reports, including a data call to support the update of the report. Work on incorporating economic and social analyses into marine spatial planning has taken place within the Pan Baltic Scope project, co-funded by the EU. The network has also discussed and planned their contribution to the sufficiency of measures analysis in the BSAP update and the HELCOM SOM Platform.

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 eight Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation, (STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018) was convened on 14-18 May 2018 in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and the ninth Meeting (STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018) was convened in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 22-26 October 2018. In addition to the biannual meeting the nature conservation theme convened an voluntary evening session on common understanding and future regional coordination of the assessment of relevant marine species and

habitats under EU directives, as well as a workshop on MPA management (10-12 September 2018, Husby, Sweden, back-to-back with an EU Natura 2000 biogeographical workshop) and a workshop on mapping migration routes of seabirds (20-22 November, HELCOM Secretariat, Helsinki, Finland) in support of implementing HELCOM Recommendation 34E-1. 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 2018 the work under State&Conservation has focused on the publication of the second version of the state of the Baltic Sea report, the associated indicator reports. The group reviewed and revised the work plan for 2019-2021, and reviewed the updated ToRs and work plans for several of the Expert Groups under the auspice of the Working Group. The group have also initiated preparing infrastructure to support the data flows for HELCOM indicators and assessment. The conservation related topics have included taking the initial steps to update the HELCOM guidelines for MPA management and designation, the process to finalize the guidelines for MPA pressure assessment, work to finalize the new HELCOM Recommendation on threatened biotopes and the update of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area, as well as initiating reporting on several other recommendations. The monitoring issues have focused on reviewing and finalizing monitoring guidelines and the monitoring manual, implementing HELCOM Recommendation 19/3 as well as discussed issues related to improving data flows.

The next meeting State and Conservation (HELCOM STATE&CONSERVATION 10/2019) has been scheduled for 6-10 May 2019, in Hamina, Finland and STATE&CONSERVATION 11/2019 has been scheduled for 21-25 October 2019, preliminarily to be held in Latvia.

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendations under State and Conservation have been revised or developed in 2018 for adoption at HELCOM 40-2019:

- HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 'Implementation of Integrated Marine and Coastal Management of Human Activities in the Baltic Sea Area'.
- HELCOM Recommendation x/x 'Conservation and Protection of Marine and Coastal Biotopes, Habitats And Biotope Complexes Categorized as Threatened According to the HELCOM Red Lists'

Reports and other deliverables

- [State of the Baltic Sea report](#): the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea, final version;
- [Estimating physical disturbance on seabed](#)
- [Status of coastal fish communities in the Baltic Sea during 2011-2016 – the third thematic assessment](#)
- The majority of the annual [HELCOM Baltic Sea Environmental fact sheets](#) have been updated by the responsible institutes in the HELCOM countries;
- monitoring guidelines for:
 - ✓ determination of PFAS in seawater
 - ✓ beach litter
 - ✓ continuous noise
 - ✓ sampling and determination of dissolved oxygen in seawater
 - ✓ determination of heavy metals in sediment
 - ✓ seal abundance and distribution in the HELCOM area

Scientific-technical guidance of projects

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

- [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; (finished)
- Upgraded HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea Species (BaltiCheck), 2018-2019
- Continuation of the Project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management (FISH PRO III), 2018-2023

Expert groups under State&Conservation

[Expert Network on hazardous substances \(EN-HZ\)](#)

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

The group held two online meetings during 2018 and was heavily involved in work related to the indicators and the State of the Baltic Sea report (especially the Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Substances), with many members of the group also participating in the [HOLAS II HZ WS 1-2018](#), at which the integrated assessment of hazardous substances was the main focus. The first online meeting, [EN-HZ 8-2018](#), focused dominantly on the finalization of the indicator assessment and reports and the relevant information for the State of the Baltic Sea report – dividing up responsibility to complete and review the indicator reports. The second meeting, [EN-HZ 9-2018](#), revisited a number of issues and factors that had been identified during the earlier work on the State of the Baltic Sea report and planned for how to explore and resolve these in the future – developing proposals on timelines for these activities. These issues included discussion related to: the development of further monitoring guidelines (e.g. PFOS and HBCDD in biota), conversion factors for monitoring of hazardous substances, the use of Al or Li for normalization processes, the inclusion of Zebra mussels in future assessments, possible use of sediment cores, and issues relating to existing study reservation on indicator components.

The group also reviewed monitoring guidelines produced by experts in the group (e.g. PFAS in seawater and heavy metals in sediments) during their review at State and Conservation, and has initiated reporting of activities to the HELCOM PRESSURE Working Group to increase the connection between status and load, particularly through work on HELCOM indicators. The HELCOM-ICES project (in association with OSPAR and the MIME script developer) to develop an automated system to calculate the hazardous substances indicators has also been a topic of discussion and will be one of the main focusses of the next EN-HZ meeting.

[Intersessional Network on benthic habitat monitoring \(IN-Benth\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Antonia Nyström Sandman

The group convened in Warnemunde, Germany for their second meeting in September 2018, [IN BENTHIC 2-2018](#). The group shared national experiences and directions related to the topic of benthic habitats prior to focussing on detailing their terms of reference (ToRs) and work plan. The group also thanked the outgoing Chair Georg Martin, Estonia, and held an election for a new Chair (electing Antonia Nyström Sandman, Sweden). Additionally, the group proposed that the group name be changed to 'HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic Habitats (EN BENTHIC)' to reflect the new and broader scope of the group's work. The detailed [ToRs and workplan](#) were the major focus of the meeting and there were subsequently endorsed at State and Conservation and HELCOM HOD 55-2018 ([Outcomes, paragraph 4.58](#)). The work of the group is underway and a number of interactions with projects (e.g. BONUS SEAM and the EU co-funded ACTION project) are being developed.

[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 further develop eutrophication indicators and assessment methodology and carry out eutrophication assessment. The group held two online meetings and one physical meeting in 2018 mainly focusing on input to 2018 version for the State of the Baltic Sea report. On the second half of 2018, the group started to work on developing and utilizing indicator scaling in eutrophication assessment methodology.

[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 Ostende, Belgium, 1–5 October 2018 and was co-chaired by Morten Frederiksen, Ian Mitchell and Volker Dierschke. The topics the group works on during the annual meetings are agreed jointly by HELCOM, OSPAR and ICES. The work programme provides a thematic overview of the work carried out by JWGBIRD, covering databases and data products, monitoring, assessment, ad hoc consultation and the ICES advisory process. Tasks under each theme will be specified on an annual basis. JWG BIRD collaborated, as needed, with national leads and co-leads of HELCOM indicators related to seabirds and with national leads of HELCOM recommendations, including but not limited to: 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', and Recommendation 37-2 'Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM red list'. The group can also work on other HELCOM projects that support the commitments mentioned above.

In 2018 the work has included the assessment of breeding and wintering birds for HOLAS II and to provide responses to the questionnaire on the review of the HELCOM indicators. The group arranged a workshop, jointly with State and Conservation WG, on mapping migration routes of seabirds (20-22 November, HELCOM Secretariat, Helsinki, Finland) in support of implementing HELCOM Recommendation 34E-1. Representatives of the group also took part in the EU workshop on threshold setting and indicator development for species.

[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 developing and updating core indicator on concentrations of radioactive substances in marine environment as well as making thematic assessments of the impacts of radioactivity on the marine environment and humans in regular intervals. In 2018, the groups latest achievement was finalized when the Thematic assessment on radioactivity 2011-2015 in the Baltic Sea was published as Baltic Sea Environment Proceeding #151. The latest meeting of the group took place in 29 - 31 May 2018 in Warsaw, Poland.

[Expert Group on Marine Mammals \(EG MAMA\)](#)

Chair: Anders Galatius, Denmark

Vice-Chair: Morten Tange Olsen, Denmark

The 12th meeting of the Seal expert group was held on 10-12 October 2018, Tallinn, Estonia. The main focus of work of the expert group during 2018 was on drafting new guidelines for monitoring of abundance and distribution, plan the further work on the indicators for nutritional and reproductive status and health. Regular reporting was also considered and updated. The group also suggested a new, more structured mode of working, with dedicated time set aside also for harbour porpoise work, and in relation to this suggested to update their name to HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA). The next meeting is planned to be held at the HELCOM Secretariat, Helsinki, Finland, on the 24-26 September 2019.

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

Chair: Mr. Lars Sonesten, Sweden

The eighth meeting of the Pressure Working Group was convened on 18-20 April 2018 in Berlin, Germany and the ninth meeting was held on 10-12 October 2018 in Riga, Latvia.

During 2018 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 10-2019) will be held on 9-12 April 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia and PRESSURE 11-2019 has tentatively been scheduled for October 2019 in Brussels, Belgium.

Reports and other deliverables

- [BSEP 153](#) “Sources and pathways of nutrients to the Baltic Sea”;
- [BSEP 162](#) “Inputs of hazardous substances to the Baltic Sea”;
- [BSEP 163](#) “Input of nutrients by the seven biggest rivers in the Baltic Sea region”;
- Executive summary of PLC-6 project;
- HELCOM pre-core test indicator for diclofenac (in cooperation with S&C);
- Reduction of Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition to the Baltic Sea and its Sub-Basins Achievable by Implementing Gothenburg Protocol/EU-NEC Directive (report).

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

- Update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2016);
- Evaluation of progress towards national nutrient input targets (2014).

Guidelines for the annual and periodical compilation and reporting of waterborne inputs to the Baltic Sea (PLC-water) (submitted for approval by HELCOM 40-2019).

An expert to draft the regional principles and risk assessment framework for management of internal nutrient reserves (ad hoc Group MINUTS) has been established.

Projects

- [Seventh Pollution load compilation \(PLC-7\) 2017-2020](#);
- Final stage of the HELCOM Project on operationalization of the nutrient reduction scheme follow-up system (MAI CART OPER) 2018-2019;
- [Estimation of reductions of atmospheric nitrogen deposition achievable by implementing the Gothenburg Protocol/EU-NEC Directive \(2017\)](#);
- [EU co-funded BSR-water project platform](#) (HELCOM is one of the partners).

Expert/correspondence groups under Pressure

Expert Network on Underwater Noise (EN-Noise)

Chair: Mr. Peter Sigray, Sweden

The network met on-line twice during 2018, reporting back to Pressure Working Group on their activities. During 2018 the network focused on the finalisation of the regional monitoring sub-programme as well as monitoring guidelines of continuous noise and HELCOM input to the process of establishing environmental targets for underwater noise, which are all now adopted by HELCOM countries. Furthermore, the HELCOM input was presented at the EU TG-NOISE Thematic workshop: “Towards thresholds for underwater noise - Common approaches for interpretation of data obtained in (Joint) Monitoring Programmes – Part 2” (7-8 November 2018, Brussels, Belgium). To ease the process the reporting format to the OSPAR-HELCOM registry of underwater noise events was updated in 2018. A lot of effort was dedicated to the update of the [section on underwater sound](#) in the State of the Baltic Sea report to mainly: (i) improve the maps showing the sound pressure level of underwater continuous sound at different frequency bands in the Baltic Sea; (ii) include a table compiling impulsive event days in the Baltic Sea as reported by countries to the regional registry (by April 2018); (iii) improve the figure showing the auditory range of some marine species present in the Baltic Sea and sound frequencies generated by human activities; and (iv) improve the map containing an example of how information on the distribution of sound can be compared with important areas for species that are sensitive to sound. In addition to the specific section on underwater sound, the ‘Input of continuous

anthropogenic sound' layer (used in the Baltic Sea Pressure Index-BSPI) was improved based on data from the BIAS project.

[Expert Network on Marine Litter \(EN-Marine Litter\)](#)

Chair: None

The network met twice during 2018 (one on-line, and one physically in the Workshop on the Implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, RAP ML), reporting back to Pressure Working Group on their activities related to the RAP ML, and to State and Conservation Working Group on monitoring issues. During 2018 the network has focused on the finalisation of the beach litter monitoring guidelines which were adopted by HELCOM countries, the update of the section on marine litter in the State of the Baltic Sea report, to mainly include information on: (i) the ten most frequent litter items at Baltic Sea level at different types of beaches, categorized into urban, peri-urban and rural beaches; and (ii) the proportion of marine litter material categories in bottom trawl hauls for sub-basins covered by the Baltic International Trawl Survey coordinated by ICES. Additionally, national experts contributed to the implementation of the RAP ML: (i) information on national activities on ALDFG have been compiled; (ii) "Principles for design reducing/preventing marine litter" evolved from the HELCOM-Interreg workshop on marine litter and eco-design held on 15 June 2018 in Berlin, Germany; (iii) raising awareness is a topic of high relevance for the region which is supported by the "Clean Beach Campaigns" activities held around the region.

[Reduction Scheme Core Drafting Group \(RedCore DG\)](#)

Chair: Lars M. Svendsen, Denmark

RedCore DG met sixth times during 2018 (three physically and three online) mainly back-to-back with PLC-7 project meetings.

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

- Methodology for assessment of effectiveness of measures using the information supplied by countries;
- Draft update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2016);
- Draft of the Executive summary of the PLC-6 project;
- Suggestion on continuation of the ENIRED project;
- Concept and programme of the Workshop on land-based nutrient loads to the Baltic Sea (NutriRed);
- Concept of the Workshop with river basin authorities;
- Suggestions to revise policy messages on N emission and deposition and emissions and deposition of hazardous substances;

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 2018. The group focused on elaboration of the HELCOM indicator on diclofenac 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. The group provided the following advises to PRESSURE group:

- suggestion on HELCOM pre-core indicator on diclofenac;
- draft questionnaire on the use of pharmaceutical in veterinary;
- draft questionnaire on handling of medical wastes.

[Expert Network on Dredging/Depositing Operations at sea \(EN DREDS\)](#)

The group had three online meetings and elaborated the following documents:

- Suggestions on the annual assessment of the data on handling of dredged material at sea;

- quality assurance of the reported data;
- suggestion on the format of consolidated reporting for LP/LC on depositing of dredged material at sea;
- test consolidated report to LP/LC on depositing of dredged material at sea.

HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri)

Chair: Ms. Tarja Haaranen, Finland

The Agri group held its 6th Meeting in Riga on 15-16 May 2018 and a meeting dedicated to the revision of Annex III part II of the Helsinki Convention in Warsaw on 8 November 2018 back-to-back with the HELCOM Workshop on regional nutrient recycling strategy on 7 November. The group established a drafting group for the revision of Annex III part II and has discussed proposed changes in several online meetings as well as in a dedicated meeting. Also, a joint drafting group with Pressure Working Group was established with the lead of Finland to elaborate a Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy. The work on the strategy has started by creating draft vision and objectives for the strategy. The group has agreed that Recommendation 24/3 should be updated and has started the process by collecting information on national measures to abate ammonia emissions.

Projects

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

[Sustainable manure and nutrient management for reduction of nutrient loss in the Baltic Sea Region \(SuMaNu\), 2018 - 2021](#)

HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish)

Chair: Ms. Marianne Goffeng Raakil, Sweden

The following meetings have been held: Eighth Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 8-2018), 23-24 May 2018, Warsaw, Poland, and the Ninth Meeting of HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 9-2019) was held on 30-31 January 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia.

The next meeting of HELCOM FISH (HELCOM FISH 10-2019) is tentatively scheduled for 25-26 June 2019 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In 2018 and 2019 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 in the Correspondence Group for fisheries data (CG Fishdata) with workshops on developing a Roadmap on collection of fisheries data held on 27 February 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark, 22 May 2018 in Warsaw, Poland and 21 November 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 first and second CBD Sustainable Ocean Initiative meetings on 26-28 September 2016 and 10-13 April 2018 in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Regular information exchange with BALTFISH was agreed at HELCOM FISH 7-2017 and at the 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, the Baltic Sea Ministers of Environment and the EU Commissioner Vella agreed to strengthen the coordination and cooperation mechanisms with fisheries bodies. In June 2018 HELCOM Chair Ms. Marianne Wenning (European Commission, EC) sent a letter to the BALTFISH Presidency (Denmark), the upcoming HELCOM Chair (Finland) and the upcoming BALTFISH Presidency (Sweden), suggesting a meeting between HELCOM and BALTFISH regarding closer cooperation between management of fisheries and the marine environment. A senior level meeting between HELCOM and BALTFISH was consequently organized on 29 January 2019, in Tallinn, Estonia (to be reported in more detail in a separate document).

BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture

The Group has progressed the work on BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture (see below). HOD 55-2018 adopted the Terms of Reference and approved the draft revised Work Plan for CG Aquaculture.

Migratory Fish species, especially sea trout and eel

Migratory fish species, with a dedicated workshop organised on sea trout population status and habitat assessment methods (see below) 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, to be published on a dedicated work space on the HELCOM Meeting portal during 2019.

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 (March-July 2018) and Mr. Henri Jokinen (from August 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, one of which was organized in 2018:

Workshop on sea trout population status and habitat assessment methods (HELCOM FISH-M 6-2018)

The workshop was organised on 26-28 June in Klaipeda, Lithuania moderated by Mr. Mika Rahikainen, HELCOM Project Manager of RETROUT. The workshop was held together with the RETROUT Project with the purpose of understanding the sea trout population status and habitat assessment methods (habitat classification, trout habitat score, improving electrofishing estimates) and harmonizing their use in the Baltic Sea region.

[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 second meeting of CG Aquaculture was held on 7-8 November 2018 in Berlin, Germany, and was moderated by Mr. Markus Helavuori (HELCOM Professional Secretary). The Meeting agreed on a way forward for the development of BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture and updated the Terms of Reference and Work Plan of CG Aquaculture for 2019-2020, which were subsequently approved by HOD 55-2018. Germany and Finland offered to take the lead in work on BAT/BEP within the CG Aquaculture. Estonia offered to take the thematic lead on matters related to monitoring of impacts from aquaculture operations, and Germany offered to take the thematic lead on matters related to nutrient input from aquaculture, subject to the possibility of appointing an expert consultant, to be confirmed by February 2019. Remaining Contracting Parties were encouraged to consider taking the thematic lead for other elements of the BAT/BEP work.

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.

[Correspondence Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation](#)

Chair: Ms. Anja Gadgård Boye, Denmark

The second meeting of HELCOM correspondence group for fisheries data (CG FISHDATA 2-2018) was held on 22 May 2018 in Warsaw, Poland. The third Workshop (CG FISHDATA 3-2018), was held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 21 November 2018. The group has continued its work on developing a Roadmap on fisheries data for operationalizing the two indicators ('Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears' and 'Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes'). A new structure for the draft Roadmap was agreed by CG FISHDATA 3-2018 and the aim is to finalize agreeing on the Roadmap at FISH 10-2019 with a view to subsequent submission for approval to HOD 57-2019.

FISH 9-2019 approved the draft Terms of Reference and new status of the Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of assessment of the marine environment (EG Fishdata), subject to endorsement by HELCOM 40-2019.

[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 joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG met two times in 2018. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 16-2018 was held in Helsinki, Finland (8-9 May) back-to-back with the first informal international information and discussion meeting on maritime spatial plans for Finnish sea areas (7-8 May). The HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 17-2018 meeting was held in Riga, Latvia (14-15 November).

During 2018 the WG has continued the follow up of the national MSP developments including implementation of the joint MSP principles as well as on the implementation of the Baltic MSP Roadmap (2013-2020). The WG revised the HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 'Implementation of integrated Marine and Coastal Management of Human Activities in the Baltic Sea Area' that was submitted to HOD 55-2018. After some final amendments from State and Conservation WG and HELCOM-VASAB WG, the revised Recommendation 24/10 was submitted to HELCOM 40-2019 for adoption. The HELCOM-VASAB WG also agreed on the HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure developed by the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group (BSR MSP Data ESG). Other important topics discussed among the WG were the launch a review of the current regional MSP framework to evaluate the implementation of the regional MSP roadmap, as well as to take a closer look at the effects of climate change on spatial planning and the potential adverse effects of exploitation of mineral resources to the seafloor.

The Working Group acts as steering body for the Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" of EUSBSR.

Projects

- [Coherent Linear Infrastructures in Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans "Baltic LINes" \(2016-2019\) \(EU co-funded\);](#)
- [HA Spatial Planning Support 3 \(2018-2020\) \(EU co-funded\);](#)
- [Pan Baltic Scope \(2018-2019\) \(EU co-funded\).](#)

[Expert groups under HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG](#)

[Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group \(BSR MSP Data ESG\)](#)

The Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-group works under HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG by supporting data, information and evidence exchange for MSP processes with regard to cross-

border/transboundary planning issues. During 2018, the Group had two physical meetings and one online meeting. The main achievement of the group for 2018 was developing and finalizing HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure, which were approved by HELCOM 55-2018 and is submitted to HELCOM 40-2019 for adoption. The guideline sets out a data model and defines codelists for sea use types and sectorial use which makes possible harmonisation of spatial data resulting from MSP plans. The group was also providing guidance to PanBalticScope project which is developing an online mapping solution for displaying spatial data resulting from MSP plans and converted to format outlined by the HELCOM-VASAB guideline. In addition, the group continued cataloguing MSP data access points provided by Contracting Parties.

HELCOM Maritime Working Group (HELCOM MARITIME)

Chair: Ms. Anna Petersson, Sweden

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

The 18th Meeting of the HELCOM Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 18-2018) was held on 25-27 September 2018 in Hamburg, Germany.

The next meeting (HELCOM MARITIME 19-2019) will be held 24-26 September 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal, hosted by the European Commission.

In 2018 the Maritime Group has focused especially on:

Air Pollution from Ships

The Group has continued its work on enhancement of implementation of the Baltic Sea NOx Emission Control, noting also the voluntary commitment by HELCOM to the UN conference "Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14" held on 5-9 June 2017 in New York. The Baltic Sea NOx Emission Control Area was adopted by IMO in July 2017 and as the 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) revised HELCOM Recommendation 28E/13 "Introducing economic incentives as a complement to existing regulations to reduce emissions from ships" (originally adopted in 2007). In addition, the Green Team reporting mechanism was established by HELCOM MARITIME 18-2018 to find out the main barriers, obstacles and challenges hindering the development and investments in green technology and alternative fuels in the Baltic Sea. As in previous years, Finland submitted a report on airborne emissions from ships in 2017.

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

The work on exemptions in accordance with regulation A-4 of the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention progressed within the HELCOM-OSPAR TG BALLAST (see below). TG BALLAST is collecting revision proposals for further updates of the JHP foreseen in 2020. HELCOM is 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 biofouling on ships' hulls. Biofouling has also been considered by the Maritime Working Group and TG Ballast, recalling also HELCOM's involvement as a strategic partner in the GEF/UNDP/IMO Glofouling Partnerships project.

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 (PRF), with a new Overview published in 2018 and submitted to IMO MEPC 73 (22-26 October 2018) as an information document. Germany has continued its working on technical guidance on best practices in sewage PRFs and use of these facilities. The work plan of the HELCOM Cooperation Platform on Special Area According to MARPOL Annex

IV (CP PRF) for 2018-2020 was updated by HELCOM Maritime 18-2018 and the next meeting (CP PRF 8-2019) is scheduled for 27-28 March 2019 in Helsinki, Finland.

Safety of Navigation

In 2018 the Group approved the 2014-2017 Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea and decided that the European Marine Casualty Information Platform (EMCIP) database should be used as the primary source for accident data in future reports. In this context, the Secretariat was requested to continue liaising with EMSA regarding obtaining access to EMCIP, and that the Secretariat will continue requesting Russia directly to provide their accident data in order to compile the annual accident reports for the Baltic Sea area.

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 which includes Contracting Parties to continue Cat I & II hydrographic surveys in the Baltic Sea to meet the 2013 revised Re-Survey Scheme, Contracting Parties to revise the Cat I & II areas in their waters based on up-to-date hydrographic surveys and current commercial shipping AIS data and the BSHC Monitoring Working Group to assess the re-survey scheme and progress in order to prepare an evaluation report to BSHC 24-2019 and further to MARITIME 19-2019 together with a proposal of further activities.

Unified interpretation in relation to access to and use of HELCOM AIS data

Recommendation 33/1 “Unified interpretation in relation to access to and use of HELCOM AIS data” was revised by AIS EWG 29-2018 (see below), approved by MARITIME 18-2018, endorsed by HOD 55-2018 with a view to adoption by HELCOM 40-2019.

HELCOM Maritime Assessment

After two years of work, the HELCOM Maritime Assessment was published in March 2018. This comprehensive report covers a wide range of human activities at sea, from commercial maritime traffic to leisure boating and from fisheries to hazardous submerged objects. It describes distribution of activities at sea, developments over time, related environmental issues as well as future perspectives and scenarios.

Other issues of special relevance

The group has continued its consideration of fertilizer cargo handling in the Baltic Sea and the potential amounts of nutrients that end up in the Baltic Sea as a result of such activities. Interested parties have been invited to investigate the matter further intersessionally.

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendation under MARITIME have been revised in 2018 for adoption at HELCOM 40-2019:

- Recommendation 33/1 “Unified interpretation in relation to access to and use of HELCOM AIS data”
- Recommendation 28E/13 “Introducing economic incentives as a complement to existing regulations to reduce emissions from ships”

Reports and Other deliverables

- HELCOM Maritime Assessment
- Revised HELCOM 2018 update to the Overview on Port Reception Facilities (PRF)
- Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea area in 2014-2017 (to be published in February 2019)

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. Ms. Nariné Svensson, Sweden

The Second Meeting of the HELCOM MARITIME Sub-group on Green Technology and Alternative Fuels for Shipping (Green Team) was held on 17 May 2018 in Turku, Finland. The Meeting considered the draft update of the HELCOM Recommendation on economic incentives (28E/13) and finalized it for approval by MARITIME 18-2018. The Meeting developed and agreed on the Green Team reporting mechanism and method based on the traffic light idea. The Meeting further discussed possible ways forward regarding further work to consider the environmental effects/risks of bunkering operations and ship to ship transfers in the Baltic Sea, including possible revision of Recommendation 28/3 on Guidelines on bunkering operations and ship to ship cargo transfer.

The next meeting of the group (GREEN TEAM 3-2019) will be organized during the Donsö Shipping Meet on 3 September 2019 in Donsö, Sweden.

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

Chair: Mr. Alar Siht, Estonia

The 29th Meeting of the Expert Working Group for Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS & Data (HELCOM AIS EWG 29-2018) was held on 12-13 June 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Meeting shared information on national developments related to AIS and drafted a proposal for the revision to Recommendation 33/1 "Unified interpretation in relation to access to and use of HELCOM AIS" as a result to the HELCOM AIS Data server move from Denmark to Norway.

The next meeting (HELCOM AIS EWG 30-2019) is planned for June 2019 in Helsinki, Finland.

Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV)

Chair: Mr. Andreas Holmgren, Sweden

The Ninth Meeting of the HELCOM Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV 9-2018) was held on 7 September 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The meeting inter alia considered information on planned amendments to the Traffic Separation Scheme "Slupska Bank" in Poland and information presented by Germany on planned routing measures in the South-West Baltic Sea, as well as a joint Danish and Swedish proposal on new Traffic Separation Schemes and other adjacent routing measures for ship traffic in Kattegat and Skagerrak, which were approved by the IMO NCSR 5 and adopted by IMO MSC 99 to enter into force on 1 July 2020.

The next meeting (SAFE NAV 10-2019) is planned for September 2019 in Stockholm, Sweden.

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 ninth meeting of the group (HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 9-2018) was held in Gothenburg, Sweden, 13-14 December 2018.

During 2018 the Group focussed on: (i) technical updates and modifications to the online decision support tool; (ii) target species (TS) selection criteria; and (iii) the content of a new chapter on the final risk assessment (i.e. an update on the Same Risk Area concept and related research results) in the Joint Harmonised Procedure (JHP).

Following discussions by MARITIME 18-2018, the Group agreed to include the tasks on early warning system and the generation of a list of surveyed ports (previously under the umbrella of the discontinued Ad Hoc Correspondence Group on Ballast Water Management) in their Work Plan.

Work from the COMPLETE project is feeding into the activities of the Group. In this regard, the Group is to further consider how the TS selection criteria in the JHP could be amended based on a proposal by the

project. Based on this work together with the follow up conducted during 2018 on the compilation of revision and review needs of the JHP, it is anticipated to develop a draft revised JHP intersessionally for consideration by TG BALLAST 10-2019, so that the revision is concluded in 2020-21.

The Group discussed the possibility to add hull fouling (recreational and commercial craft) to their ToR and agreed no to do so, but rather taking a more flexible approach such as having a workshop on the topic. It is foreseen that such a workshop is held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 4-5 April 2019, organised by The Netherlands, who has kindly invited HELCOM and OSPAR countries as well as the COMPLETE Project partners and other interested stakeholders.

The next meeting of TG BALLAST is envisaged to be held in Estonia in November 2019 (to be confirmed).

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

Chair: Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany

HELCOM MARITIME 18-2018 updated the Work Plan of the HELCOM Cooperation Platform on Special Area According to MARPOL Annex IV (CP PRF) for 2018-2020. Germany has continued its working on technical guidance on best practices in sewage PRFs and use of these facilities. However, no meetings of CP PRF were held in 2018.

The next meeting (CP PRF 8-2019) is scheduled for 27-28 March 2019 in Helsinki, Finland.

HELCOM Response Working Group (HELCOM RESPONSE)

Chair: Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Finland

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

The 24th meeting of HELCOM RESPONSE was held in Klaipeda, Lithuania on 10-12 April 2018. The 25th Meeting of HELCOM RESPONSE was held in Rostock Warnemünde, Germany on 14-16 November 2018.

The 26th meeting will be held on 11-13 June 2019 in Warsaw, Poland and the 27th meeting is scheduled for spring 2020 in Denmark with dates and venue to be confirmed at a later stage.

Response Operations

In 2018 the Contracting Parties shared information on recent response operations and took note of the HELCOM Annual report on the accidents and pollution response operations (2014-2017) prepared jointly with the Maritime Working Group.

Target spills and Response objectives

The group has worked on definitions for adequate sub-regional response capacity and related target spills. RESPONSE 25-2018 agreed to discontinue the Correspondence Group on revision of HELCOM Recommendation 28E/12 as no progress has been made since the previous Response meeting. It was, however, agreed that cooperation among the Contracting Parties should be improved. Furthermore, the Meeting noted that information sharing, and preferably coordination of vessel overhauls, should be improved between the Contracting Parties to avoid situations of lacking response capacity on the sub-regional level.

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 (HREP) and updated terms of reference for the HELCOM Exercise Evaluation Team (EET). Sweden has offered to take the lead on developing a draft HREP for consideration by RESPONSE 26-2019.

In 2018, the annual BALEX DELTA exercise was held in Karlskrona, Sweden from 28 to 30 August. With additional support from the European Union through its DG Echo programme, the 2018 edition was larger than usual, dealing with both oil and chemical spills, and with response exercises held at sea and also on shore. The BALEX DELTA 2018 exercise mobilized about 500 personnel from eight countries and the EU. 18

maritime vessels, one aircraft, one helicopter and various clean-up tools were also deployed in the exercise which was deemed to be very useful.

The BALEX DELTA 2019 exercise will take place during the last week of August 2019 in the Bornholm area, Denmark.

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 revised paragraph 7.5.3 of the HELCOM Response Manual Volume I Chapter 7 as proposed by the Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance (IWGAS 2018). The Group has also revised Chapter 7 regarding the frequency of Coordinated Extended Pollution Control Operations (CEPCOs) organized in the Baltic Sea and North Sea. Furthermore, the Group has revised Chapters 10.5 and 11 of Volume 1 of the Manual. All of these revisions have been submitted to HELCOM 40-2019 for adoption (document 3-5).

The Group has also started the planning the work for a comprehensive revision of the all three volumes of the Response Manual, to be commenced during 2019. The current manual Volume 1 has grown over the years and a streamlining it could improve user friendliness and readability. Volume 2 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. HELCOM engagement in a joint project application on updating regional response manuals on chemical spills was confirmed through partnership in the West MOPoCo project together with, e.g. the Mediterranean (REMPEC) and North Sea (Bonn Agreement). Through this project, an inter-regional response manual for chemical spills will be developed, thereby also renewing the HELCOM Response Manual Volume 2.

Recommendations

The Group has considered a list of all valid HELCOM Response related recommendations and agreed on a way forward to review them, in cooperation with relevant sub-groups as well as the Maritime Working Group, with a view to considering their relevance and validity, as well as proposals for revisions as appropriate, at RESPONSE 26-2019.

Reports and other deliverables

Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2017 (published 2018).

Projects

- Open-source tools for regional risk assessments for improved European preparedness and response at Sea (OpenRisk), EU co-funded (2017-2019)
- Communication support for BALEX DELTA 2018, EU co-funded (2017-2019)

Expert groups under RESPONSE

Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance (IWGAS)

Chair: Mr. Fredrik Lindblom, Sweden

In 2018 the annual meeting of HELCOM IWGAS was held in Stockholm/Skavsta Airport on 22-23 March.

The Group inter alia compiled the annual report on spills observed via aerial surveillance, agreed on a proposal to revise the HELCOM Response Manual Volume 1 with regard to frequency of Coordinated Extended Pollution Control Operation (CEPCO) flights and considered the operational needs for satellite coverage in the Baltic Sea.

The 2019 IWGAS meeting will take place 20-21 March 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia.

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

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik, Estonia

The second meeting of the HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE Network 2-2018) was held on 30 August in Karlskrona, Sweden.

The Group shared information on national and regional developments of the relevance to SHORE network and considered experiences from the BALEX DELTA 2018 exercise. In addition, the Group agreed on proposals for revising the exercise chapter in the HELCOM Response Manual Volume 1 (Chapter 10). The Group also considered a proposal to revise Chapter 4 of Volume 3 of the Response Manual and agreed to revisit the matter at a future session.

SHORE Network 3-2019 is planned for May 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia.

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

Chair: Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm

The Eleventh Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 10-2018) was held as an online meeting on 1 June 2018. The Twelfth Meeting of the Expert Working Group (EWG OWR 12-2018) was held as an online meeting on 18 October 2018.

The Group shared information on national OWR planning and preparedness activities which were taking place in the intersessional period. Among the key issues the Group discussed mass euthanasia of oiled seabirds, including existing practices of protocols of mass euthanasia, and the steps to developing an overall strategy for mass euthanasia as an OWR tool. The group adopted the Self-Assessment Tool as a tool for national OWR reporting, developed by Sea Alarm. Further, the group is planning to organize in 2019 a one-day online seminar with lectures on euthanasia, and/or early incident response.

The next meeting of the group (EWG OWR 13-2019) will be held as an online meeting on 14 March 2019.

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

Co-Chairs: Mr. Jens Sternheim, Germany, Mr. Jorma Rytönen, Finland and Mr. Jacek Beldowski (Poland)

HELCOM SUBMERGED 6-2018 was held on 4 May 2019 in Berlin, Germany and SUBMERGED 7-2018 was held on 12 November in Rostock Warnemünde, Germany.

The Group made progress on the development of the HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects and agreed on a way forward with two drafting groups to work by correspondence in order to continue the work on the chapters on warfare materials and wrecks, respectively. The Group also agreed on a proposal to prolong the mandate of the Submerged Expert Group until the end of 2020, which was subsequently approved by HOD 55-2018.

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