



Document title	Progress of work of the HELCOM subsidiary bodies, as well as expert and correspondence groups during 2019
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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 5-14.

Action requested

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

HELCOM Group for Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (Gear)

Chair: Ms. Andrea Weiss, Germany

Vice-Chair: Asker Juul Aagren, Denmark

The 20th meeting of HELCOM GEAR was held on 15-17 May 2019 in Berlin, Germany, at the premises of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the 21st meeting was held on 6-8 November 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. In addition an extra online ad hoc meeting of was held on 26 November 2019, which focused the harmonization and tentative adjustment of HELCOM objectives. This meeting included also the Chairs of other HELCOM Working Groups.

During 2019 GEAR focused on contributing to the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, the scoping for and planning of HOLAS III and associated processes, 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 22nd meeting of GEAR will be held in Brussels, Belgium, on 27-19 April 2019 and 23d meeting of HELCOM GEAR will be held in Berlin, Germany on the 9-11 November 2020.

Strategic guidance of projects

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

Third Holistic Assessment of the State of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III) (2022-2023)

HOLAS III associated processes, including the HELCOM Core Indicator Project (2018-2021) and the planned HELCOM Data Flow Project (2020-2021).

Expert groups under GEAR

[HELCOM expert network on economic and social analyses \(EN-ESA\)](#)

Chair: -

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 2019, the network organized six meetings. ESA network convened in meetings in Helsinki in 9 April and 18 September 2019. Online meetings took place in 3 June, 21 August, 5 September, and 25 November 2019. In addition, the network contributed to the sufficiency of measures analysis through the SOM Platform meeting 2-2019 in Helsinki in September. The work in 2019 focused on the sufficiency of measures analysis for the BSAP update, partially through the HELCOM ACTION project, co-funded by the EU. In addition, the network prepared an update of the roadmap for continued work on HELCOM ESA, a proposal for ESA in HELCOM HOLAS III, a response to the HELCOM survey of knowledge and research needs, and a proposal on concretization of actions for the updated BSAP. In addition, recommendations were provided for developing a framework for ESA in maritime spatial planning as part of the Pan Baltic Scope project, co-funded by the EU.

HELCOM Drafting Group on MSFD coordination in the Baltic Sea region (DG MSFD)

Chair: Chair of GEAR Andrea Weiss, Germany

The drafting group meets online to support and further develop a structured process for GEAR to maintain HELCOM's role as the coordinating platform for HELCOM EU Member States, for the regional implementation of the MSFD in the Baltic Sea, including striving for harmonised national marine strategies for achieving good environmental status. In 2019 the work focused mostly on work linked to regional coordination of MSFD Programmes of Measures.

HELCOM Maritime Working Group (Maritime)

Chair: Ms. Anna Petersson, Sweden (until end of 2019), Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany (from 2020)

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

The 19th Meeting of the HELCOM Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 19-2019) was held on 24-26 September 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal, hosted by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

An Intersessional Meeting of the Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 19A-2020) will be held 16-17 March 2020 in Helsinki, Finland, hosted by the Secretariat.

Since HELCOM 40-2019 the Maritime Group has focused especially on:

Air Pollution from Ships

The dedicated expert group HELCOM Green Team (see below) has considered the first results of the Green Team reporting mechanism, which 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. Another achievement in 2019 in this regard was adoption by HOD 56-2019 of the HELCOM Recommendation on “Introducing economic incentives as a complement to existing regulations to reduce pollution from ships, as mandated by HELCOM 40-2019. As in previous years, Finland submitted a report on airborne emissions from ships in 2018.

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). The ongoing revision of the HELCOM OSPAR Joint Harmonized Procedure (JHP) is expected to be completed in 2020. HELCOM is a partner in a dedicated Interreg project COMPLETE (2017-2020) which 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 the Overview updated annually document. The Technical Guidance for the Handling of Wastewater in Ports of the Baltic Sea Special Area under MARPOL Annex IV was approved by HOD 56-2019 and subsequently published on the HELCOM website.

Safety of Navigation

In 2019 the Group approved the 2018 Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea. Final arrangements were made by the Secretariat and EMSA to implement the decision that the European Marine Casualty Information Platform (EMCIP) database should be used as the primary source for accident data in future reports, starting with the accidents that occurred in 2019.

A Draft HELCOM Recommendation on Deep-Sea Pilotage in the Baltic Sea was developed and approved for adoption by HOD 41-2020, as well as a revision to HELCOM Recommendation 23/3 on enhancing the use of pilots in route T and the Sound.

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 adopted by HELCOM 40-2019.

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.

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendation under MARITIME have been developed or revised in 2019 for adoption at HELCOM 41-2020:

- Draft HELCOM Recommendation on Deep-Sea Pilotage in the Baltic Sea was developed and approved for adoption by HOD 41-2020

Revised draft HELCOM Recommendation 23/3 on enhancing the use of pilots in route T and the Sound.

Reports and Other deliverables

- Revised HELCOM 2019 update to the Overview on Port Reception Facilities (PRF)
- A Technical Guidance for the handling of wastewater in Ports of the Baltic Sea Special Area under MARPOL Annex IV
- Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea area in 2018 (to be published in early 2020)

Projects

- Completing management options in the Baltic Sea Region to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping (COMPLETE), EU co-funded, 2017-2020.
- Clean Shipping Project Platform (CSHIPP) EU co-funded, 2018 – 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 third Meeting of the HELCOM MARITIME Sub-group on Green Technology and Alternative Fuels for Shipping (Green Team) was held on 3 during the Donsö Shipping Meet on 3 September 2019 in Donsö, Sweden.. The Meeting considered the first results from the Green Team reporting mechanism and method based on the traffic light idea and agreed on improvements on the mechanism. The Meeting further agreed to the updated Work Plan (2020-2021), which was subsequently approved by MARITIME 19-2019.

The next meeting of the group (GREEN TEAM 4-2020) will be organized back-to-back with the Åland Maritime Day 2020 on 13 May 2020 in Mariehamn, Åland Islands, Finland.

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

Chair: Mr. Alar Siht, Estonia

The 30th Meeting of the Expert Working Group for Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS & Data (HELCOM AIS EWG 30-2019) was held on 28-29 May 2019 in Helsinki, Finland.

The Meeting shared information on national developments related to AIS and inter alia agreed on procedures for access to and use of HELCOM AIS information.

The next meeting (HELCOM AIS EWG 31-2020) is planned for May 2020 in Oslo, Norway.

Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV)

Chair: Mr. Andreas Holmgren, Sweden

The tenth Meeting of the HELCOM Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV 10-2019) was held on 19 September 2019 in Stockholm, Sweden.

The meeting inter alia considered and agreed on the draft HELCOM Recommendation on Deep-Sea Pilotage in the Baltic Sea and the revised draft HELCOM Recommendation 23/3 on enhancing the use of pilots in route T and the Sound, to be adopted by HELCOM 41-2020.

The next meeting (SAFE NAV 10-2019) is planned to be held in Korsør, Denmark, tentatively in May 2020.

[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 (until end of 2019), Ms. Ms. Katja Broeg, Germany, and Mr. Ville-Veikko Intovuori, Finland (from 2020)

The tenth meeting of the group (HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 10-2019) was held in Tallinn, Estonia, 17-18 December 2019.

During 2019 the Group focussed on: (i) technical updates and modifications to the risk analysis algorithm as basis for the online decision support tool; (ii) and the revision and update of the proposal of the Joint Harmonised Procedure (JHP).

Following discussions by MARITIME 19-2019, the Group agreed to widening its scope to also address biofouling and rename TG Ballast to “Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on the Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling”. HOD 57-2019 subsequently approved the proposal and the revised ToR for TG Ballast to be extended until 2024, subject to consideration and agreement by OSPAR EIHA in April 2020.

Work from the COMPLETE project is feeding into the activities of the Group. In this regard, it has been recognized that there is a need to check and update the HELCOM and OSPAR target species lists to ensure they are coherent with the adopted criteria. It is suggested that such a task is conducted through a joint HELCOM and OSPAR countries effort, due to the difficulties that countries may face to conduct such work individually. One possible way forward on the HELCOM side could be to conduct the update work during the extension phase project of the present COMPLETE Project if funding will be granted.

The next meeting of TG BALLAST is envisaged to be held in Spain in November 2020 (to be confirmed).

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

Chair: Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany

The HELCOM Cooperation Platform on Special Area According to MARPOL Annex IV (CP PRF 8-2019) was organized 27-28 March 2019 in Helsinki, Finland. The Meeting continued its work on the Technical Guidance on best practices in sewage PRFs and use of these facilities, which was subsequently published in January 2020. The Meeting inter alia also contributed to the annual HELCOM overview of sewage port reception facilities (PRF)

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

Chair: Mr. Lars Sonesten, Sweden

In the last year the Pressure Working Group convened 4 meetings two of them were online. During the year the BSAP update consumed a lot of groups working time. By the way, the group worked on update of the nutrient input ceilings, development of regional risk assessment framework for internal nutrient reserves management, advancement of the Helcom framework on hazardous substances, development of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise and Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy. As a routine work, the Group has been following up the implementation of the HELCOM nutrient input reduction scheme and Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter; implementation of the HELCOM joint action on micropollutants in waste water treatment plans, preparation of the consolidated reporting for London convention on dredged material and other activities related to the Group's ToR.

The next meeting of the group (PRESSURE 12-2020) will be held on 21-14 April 2020 in Helsinki, Finland and PRESSURE 13-2020 has tentatively been scheduled on the week 12-16 October 2020 in Sweden.

Reports and other deliverables

- [HELCOM 2019. Noise sensitivity of animals in the Baltic Sea. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings N° 167](#)
- [Survey of polystyrene foam \(EPS and XPS\) in the Baltic Sea](#)
- [Background information on the Baltic Sea catchment area for the Sixth Baltic Sea Pollution load compilation \(PLC-6\);](#)
- [Applied methodology for the PLC-6 assessment;](#)
- [Quantifying nutrient sources to inland waters \(source-oriented approach\): A pilot case;](#)
- [PLC-Water-Guidelines-2019;](#)
- ENIRED II - Reduction of Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition to the Baltic Sea and its Sub-Basins Achievable by Implementing Gothenburg Protocol/EU-NEC Directive (report);
- [Review of existing policies and research related to microplastics.](#)

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

- Update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2017);
- Evaluation of progress towards national nutrient input targets (2014).

Baltic Sea Environmental Fact Sheets:

- Depositing of Dredged Material in the Baltic Sea in 2017;
- Atmospheric emissions of heavy metals in the Baltic Sea region 2017;
- Atmospheric deposition of heavy metals in the Baltic Sea region 2017;
- Atmospheric emissions of dioxins and furans (PCDD/Fs) in the Baltic Sea region 2017;
- Atmospheric depositions of dioxins and furans (PCDD/Fs) in the Baltic Sea region 2017;
- Nitrogen emissions to the air in the Baltic Sea area 2017;
- Nitrogen depositions to the air in the Baltic Sea area 2017;
- Waterborne nitrogen and phosphorous inputs and water flow to the Baltic Sea 1995-2017.

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;
- ENIRED II - 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);
- EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region project: [FanPLESStic-sea](#) - Initiatives to remove microplastics before they enter the sea (HELCOM is one of the partners).

[Expert/correspondence groups under Pressure](#)

Expert Network on Underwater Noise (EN-Noise)

Chair: Mr. Peter Sigray, Sweden (until end of 2019), Mr. Jakob Tougaard, Denmark (from 2020)

The network met on-line five times during 2019 and one physically, reporting back to Pressure Working Group on their activities. During 2019 the network focused on the drafting of the Action Plan on Underwater Noise, setting up of the HELCOM continuous noise database and soundscape planning tool and design future work on underwater noise indicators. The network also contributed to the work on the SOM, BSAP updated

and science agenda (e.g. survey on knowledge and research gaps) as requested. Finally, the report “Noise sensitivity of animals in the Baltic Sea” was published as BSEP n. 167.

Expert Network on Marine Litter (EN-Marine Litter)

Chair: None

The network met four times during 2018 (three 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 focused on drafting the HELCOM monitoring sub-programme on beach litter which was approved by HOD 56-2019 and design future work on marine litter indicators. The network also contributed to the work on the SOM, BSAP updated and science agenda (e.g. survey on knowledge and research gaps) as requested. Additionally, national experts contributed to the implementation of the RAP ML: possible actions to address (i) ALDFG and (ii) EPS and XPS were identified; (iii) the revision of HELCOM Recommendation on storm water management was initiated.

Reduction Scheme Core Drafting Group (RedCore DG)

Chair: Lars M. Svendsen, Denmark

RedCore DG met seven times during 2019 (three physically and four online) mainly back-to-back with PLC-7 project meetings.

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

- Draft update of the HELCOM nutrient input reduction scheme;
- Draft update of the national nutrient input ceiling’s values;
- Draft update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2017);
- ToR for ENIRED II project;
- Programme of the workshop with river basin management authorities;
- Suggestions to revise policy messages on N emission and deposition and emissions and deposition of hazardous substances;
- Proposals for rephrasing of nutrient input related actions to be transferred to the updated BSAP;
- Reviewing of nutrient input related technical recommendations adopted before 2007;
- Methodological advice on the use of the PLC data for evaluation of effectiveness of measures and SOM analysis.

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 2019. The group focused on the support of the SOM platform work related to pharmaceuticals and expert assessment of the results of questionnaire on the use of pharmaceutical in veterinary and handling of medical wastes. The group also contributed to the HELCOM work indicators, rephrasing of the actions which supposed to be transferred to the updated BSAP, advancement of the report on micropollutants in the WWTP and proposals for the HELCOM science agenda.

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

Chair: None

The group had three online meetings in 2019. Two regular meetings and an ad hoc meeting to decide on the final version of the revision of the Recommendation 36/2 and Guideline, that was submitted to HOD 57-2019. The mandate for the group expired in the end of 2018 and encouraged by the PRESSURE group the EN DREDS suggested to prolong the groups’ mandate for the years 2019-2021. The updated ToR was endorsed by PRESSURE and adopted by HELCOM 40-2019.

PRESSURE 10-2019 endorsed the final draft analysis data on handling of dredged material at sea to be used as HELCOM Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheet (BSEFS). The first BSEFS for Depositing of Dredged Material in the Baltic Sea was published for 2016 data during summer 2019 and the next for 2017 data was published

shortly after. From now on the fact sheet will be published annually after the data verification process has been carried out, according to timeline indicated in the revised HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea, submitted to HELCOM 41-2020 adoption. An updated dataset was published in HELCOM Map and Data Service during 2019 to cover years 2006-2017. The update included an improved technical approach to present depositing data as well as a direct link between dredging sites and deposit sites was created.

The first trial consolidated report to London Convention / London Protocol was submitted during spring 2019, covering 2017 data. HELCOM and LC/LP considered the trial successful and agreed to continue the practice. In order to Institutionalize the reporting, EN DREDS started the process to revise and update the HELCOM Recommendation 36/2 and the Guidelines. The final draft, based on initial ideas by EN DREDS 8-2019, was agreed by the ad hoc meeting in November, but due to short notice of the meeting and insufficient participation, final approval was done via correspondence. The group also started to exchange views on the need to develop recommendations for the methods to account the effect of dredging/depositing operations at sea in the future HELCOM assessment of the sea floor damage, such as HOLAS III.

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

Chair: Vilja Klemola, Finland

The group started work in 2019 and already has had 4 online and one physical meeting. The group specifically focused on the development of the risk assessment framework for internal nutrient reserves management. The group has already proposed an outline for the framework consisting of HELCOM Recommendation including a thesaurus for the subject and a Guideline for the permitting procedures applicable for research and commercial projects to apply sea-based measures to managed internal nutrients reserves. A draft Recommendation has already been presented at PRESSURE 11-2019 and drafting the Guideline has also been launched. Delivery of the group work resulted are anticipated in the autumn 2020 according to the group's ToR.

HELCOM Response Working Group (Response)

Chair: Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Finland

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

The 26th meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 26-2019) was held on 11-13 June 2019 in Warsaw, Poland

The 27th meeting was held on 26-28 February 2020 in Vejle, Denmark.

The 28th meeting is scheduled for November 2020 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Response Operations

In 2019 the Contracting Parties shared information on recent response operations and took note of the HELCOM Annual report on the accidents and pollution response operations (2018) prepared jointly with the Maritime Working Group.

Response Exercises including evaluation

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

In 2019, the annual BALEX DELTA exercise was held in Bornholm, Denmark from 27 to 29 August. The BALEX DELTA 2020 exercise will take place on 25-27 August 2020 near Tallinn, Estonia.

Response capacity developments

In 2019 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 started the work for a comprehensive revision of the all three volumes of the Response Manual, to be completed during 2020. The current manual Volume 1 has grown over the years and a streamlining it as well as combining it with Volume 3 on shore response would 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 is being developed, thereby also renewing the HELCOM Response Manual Volume 2.

Recommendations

In 2019 the Group continued its review of all valid HELCOM Response related recommendations and agreed on a way forward on those in need of updating, in cooperation with relevant sub-groups as well as the Maritime Working Group. RESPONSE 26-2019 agreed that Recommendation 24/7 “Further development and use of drift forecasting for oils and other harmful substances in the Baltic” should be withdrawn as its provisions have been accomplished. HOD 57-2019 supported this and HELCOM 41-2020 is expected to withdraw the Recommendation.

Reports and other deliverables

Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2018 (published in September 2019).

Projects

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

[Expert groups under Response](#)

[Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance \(IWGAS\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik

In 2019 the annual meeting of HELCOM IWGAS was held in 20-21 March 2019 in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Group inter alia compiled the annual report on spills observed via aerial surveillance, updated the satellite coverage requirements in the Baltic Sea, including revision of the numbers of monthly satellite images requested for HELCOM Area 3 and concluded that HELCOM Recommendation 34E/4 on Airborne surveillance with remote sensing equipment in the Baltic Sea area to be up to date and should remain valid .

The 2020 IWGAS meeting will take place 26-27 March 2020 in Tallinn, Estonia.

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

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik, Estonia

The third meeting of the HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE Network 3-2019) was held on 22 May in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Group shared information on national and regional developments of the relevance to SHORE network and inter alia considered the review of the HELCOM Response Manual, the development of the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP) and the possible need to revise HELCOM Recommendations that relate to on shore response.

SHORE Network 4-2020 was held on 25 February in Vejle, Denmark.

Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR)**Chair: Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm**

The 13th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 13-2019) was held as an online meeting on 14 March 2019. The 14th Meeting of the Expert Working Group (EWG OWR 14-2019) was held as an online meeting on 17 September 2019.

The Group shared information on national OWR planning and preparedness activities which were taking place in the intersessional period discussed mass euthanasia of oiled seabirds and updated its work plan for 2020-2021, subsequently approved by HOD 56-2019.

The 15th meeting of the group (EWG OWR 15-2020) was cancelled due to a low number of participants.

Expert Group on environmental risks of hazardous submerged objects (SUBMERGED)**Co-Chairs: Mr. Jens Sternheim, Germany, Mr. Jorma Rytönen, Finland and Mr. Jacek Bełdowski (Poland)**

No official Meetings of the Submerged Expert Group were held in 2019. The Group, however made progress on the development of the HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects by organizing informal drafting meetings and working by correspondence. The Submerged Assessment is scheduled for completion in 2020 with a planned submission of a final draft for agreement by RESPONSE 28-2020 in November.

SUBMERGED 8-2020 was held on 7-8 January in Kiel, Germany and SUBMERGED 9-2020 is planned for early autumn 2020.

HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State&Conservation)**Co-Chairs: Ms. Marie-Louise Krawack, Denmark and Mr Norbert Häubner, Sweden.****Vice-Co-Chairs: Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, and Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Finland**

The tenth Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation, (STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019) was convened on 6-10 May 2019 in Hamina, Finland, in the premises of Kumppanuustalo Hilma, and the eleventh Meeting (STATE & CONSERVATION 11-2019) was convened on 21-25 October 2019 in Riga, Latvia, at the premises of Ministry of Environmental Protection and regional Development of Latvia. In addition to the biannual meetings the working group has convened four intersessional online meetings (STATE&CONSERVATION 10a-2019, STATE&CONSERVATION 10b-2019, STATE&CONSERVATION 11a-2019 and STATE&CONSERVATION 11MA-2019). These meetings have focused on supporting the process to update the Baltic Sea Action plan, the review and update of the HELCOM MPA designation guidelines and the review and update of the HELCOM monitoring manual.

During 2019 the work under State&Conservation has focused on work to support the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, including the review and update of the objectives and the rephrasing of existing actions. The WG has worked on the scoping and planning for HOLAS III and associated processes, including consolidation and further development of indicators and preparing infrastructure to support the data flows for HELCOM indicators and assessment. The conservation related topics have included taking the initial steps towards an HELCOM project proposal to improve the regional MPA network, by increasing both network effectiveness and management effectiveness, provisionally intended to be submitted under EU LIFE call. The WG has also dedicated work to finalize 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 session has focused on planning and starting the process to review and revise the HELCOM 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 12/2019) has been scheduled for 11-15 May 2020, in Tallinn, Estonia and STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020 has been scheduled for 5-9 October 2020, preliminarily to be held in Sweden.

Recommendations

The following HELCOM Recommendations under State and Conservation have been revised or developed in 2019 for adoption at HELCOM 41-2020:

- HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area .

Reports and other deliverables

- Action plan on Sturgeon
- Updated guidelines for designation of Marine Protected Areas
- 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:
 - ✓ coastal fish monitoring
 - ✓ phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass
 - ✓ biological material sampling and sample handling for the analysis of persistent organic pollutants (PAHs, PCBs and OCPs) and metallic trace elements
 - ✓ Chlorophyll a

Scientific-technical guidance of projects

- 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 (FISH PRO III), 2018-2023
- Third Holistic Assessment of the State of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III) (2022-2023)
- HOLAS III associated processes, including the HELCOM Core Indicator Project (2018-2021) and the planned HELCOM Data Flow Project (2020-2021).
- Actions to evaluate and identify effective measures to reach GES in the Baltic Sea marine region (HELCOM ACTION), 2019-2020

[Expert groups under State&Conservation](#)

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

Co-Chairs: Ms. Berit Brockmeyer, Germany and Mr. Jaakko Mannio , Finland

The group held one online and one physical meetings during 2019 and has held two online meetings in mid-February 2020. The [EN-HZ 10-2019](#) meeting focused on several key issues, including: the development of the groups Terms of Reference (ToRs) and subsequently the detailing of a workplan to support the ToRs, discussion on the automated indicator assessment tool developed via ICES, expected input to the Sufficiency of Measures analysis, provided input to the future work on HELCOM indicators process, and discussed several technical developments such as a new indicator to address copper, correction factors in assessments, normalization approaches, and additional species for possible inclusion in assessments. The [EN-HZ 11-2019](#) meeting focused strongly on the input of the group to the sufficiency of measures work and contributed to the HELCOM Science and Research needs process. Remaining time was allocated to additional development by ICES regarding the automated assessment tool and progress on HELCOM monitoring and assessment guidelines. Intersessional work was carried out to prepare input to the future work on HELCOM indicators process, including participation in the Second HELCOM indicator Workshop by several members of the group.

The two recent meetings have focused on Biological Effects and general progress within the group, dominantly related to planning issues for the work of the group for 2020 and onwards. The general information for both of these processes is available at the meeting site for [EN-HZ 12-2020](#). The Biological Effects process builds on earlier work within the group and an associated questionnaire distributed via State and Conservation. The online meeting brought together a number of additional experts previously not involved in EN-HZ on a regular basis and explored common ground and established planning for a physical workshop on the topic in autumn 2020. Similarly, the EN-HZ meeting itself focused on planning of work in relation to the groups ToRs and the outcomes of important processes such as the future work on HELCOM indicators. The intersessional work required for a productive physical meeting in autumn (back-to-back with the Biological effects workshop) was set out. The outcomes of both of these processes will be shortly available in the meeting site.

[Expert Network on benthic habitats \(EN-Benthic\)](#)

Chair: Ms. Antonia Nyström Sandman, Sweden

EN Benthic works towards an assessment of benthic habitats and seafloor integrity. The existing indicators for benthic habitats are generally not fully compatible with new MSFD criteria for descriptor 6, or are not developed sufficiently to carry out evaluations and regional implementation. EN Benthic has started planning how to develop the benthic assessment for HOLAS III. The group convened in November 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, for their third meeting, [EN BENTHIC 3-2019](#), and will hold a workshop dedicated to the development of indicators and assessment in March 2020 in Copenhagen. The group will also have an online meeting dedicated to follow up of the terms of reference of the group in March. The group has also supported the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan by providing information on sufficiency of measures affecting Benthic Habitats. In addition, a [HELCOM workshop for habitat mapping](#), focusing into the methods of mapping and monitoring, took place in November 2019, and a second habitat mapping workshop, focusing on modelling and use of data will take place in 2020.

[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 four online meetings in 2019 and has held [a physical meeting in 2020](#). The group has worked on further development of HELCOM eutrophication test assessment using eutrophication quality ratios with indicator scaling. The group has also worked on improving the confidence assessment by taking both temporal and spatial confidence aspects into account. Work is also ongoing towards a common indicator for deep water oxygen in shallow open-sea waters. Other topics that the group has worked on include developing remaining targets for total nutrients, and aggregation rules of the HEAT tool used in the integrated assessment.

[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 October in Tartu, Estonia 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. JWGBIRD 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 2019 the work has included preliminary planning for the assessment of breeding and wintering birds for HOLAS III and to provide responses to the Sufficiency of Measures survey to support the BSAP update. The group has also supported the work of EN CLIME and identifying key messages on marine birds for the upcoming HELCOM Climate Change Factsheet. The next meeting will be held on 28 September - 1 October 2020 on the island of Helgoland, Germany.

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

Chair: Ms. Tamara Zalewska, Poland The 9th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea (MORS EG 9-2019) was held on 21-23 May 2019 at the premises of the Center for Nuclear Technologies, Technical University of Denmark (DTU Nutech) in Roskilde, Denmark

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 2019, the group worked e.g. on providing annual updates and quality assuring the environmental and discharge databases. The group also reviewed and updated the Guidelines for Monitoring of Radioactive Substances.

Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA)

Chair: Anders Galatius, Denmark

Vice-Chair: Morten Tange Olsen, Denmark

The 13th meeting of the Expert Group on Marine Mammals was held on 24–26 September 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of Ministry of the Interior. The main focus of work of the expert group during 2019 was on drafting new guidelines for monitoring, plan the further work on the indicators to support HOLAS III and consider the issues raised at the HELCOM workshop and BaltFish symposium on seal-fisheries interactions. The group also worked to provide input to the HELCOM Science Agenda, as well as revising and developing monitoring guidelines. The group has been taking work forward and sharing information through the four dedicated teams: the intersessional team for seal populations, the intersessional team for seal distribution, the Harbour Purpoise team and the Marine Mammal Health Team. The Marine Mammal Health Team held a physical intersessional meeting on 14- 15 August 2019 in Büsum, Germany. The next meeting is planned to be held at the HELCOM Secretariat, Helsinki, Finland, on the 24-26 September 2019.

Joint HELCOM/Baltic Earth Expert Network on Climate Change (EN CLIME)

Co- Chairs: Markus Meier, Baltic Earth, Clarisse Kehler-Siebert, HELCOM

The group is a joint Expert Network between HELCOM and Baltic Earth and works to facilitate the regional cooperation in relation to climate change and its impacts, including transferring quality assured science to end users. The main goal is to condense the large body of scientific research into a form that is directly utilizable in developing HELCOM core indicators, updating and implementing BSAP, and in preparation of future HELCOM Assessments on climate change. In 2019 the group has worked to identify and consolidate topics for inclusion in the HELCOM Climate Change Factsheet, identify suitable experts and commenced the work on preparing key messages for each topic. The group has held three online meeting, as well as one physical meeting (19 August, Stockholm, Sweden), as well as numerous online meetings of the teams drafting the key messages.

HELCOM Network for Marine Protected Area Management (MPA MANET)

Chair: none. Guided by the HELCOM Secretariat.

The overall scope of the group is to enhance the management of Baltic Sea MPAs, on an individual, national and regional level, accounting for both management of individual areas and the network. The work of the group helps facilitate regional cooperation and exchange of experiences between managers, facilitate mutual

understanding and foster the development of, and actively contribute to achieve, an efficient, representative, connected, integrated and effectively managed network of Baltic Sea MPAs.

The latest meeting of the group was in the form of a capacity building workshop on stakeholder interaction in MPA management, which took place 9-12 September in Vaasa, Finland.

HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri)

Chair: Ms. Tarja Haaranen, Finland (until spring 2019), Ms. Sari Luostarinen, Finland (elected for 2020-2021)

The 7th Meeting of the Agri group was held in St. Petersburg on 19-20 March 2019 and 8th Meeting in Berlin on 5-6 November 2019. The group continued the revision of the Annex III part II of the Helsinki Convention, drafting of the vision and objectives for the Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy and planning a workshop on nutrient recycling measures as well as drafting the HELCOM Recommendation on the use of national manure standards. The group also compiled an overview of measures to mitigate ammonia emissions in agriculture as background for the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 24/3.

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 Tenth Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 10-2019) was held on 25-26 June 2019 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The next meeting of FISH (FISH 11-2020) will be held 11-12 March 2020 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Since HELCOM 40-2019 the Fish Group has continued supporting the process to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan and worked on a number of matters as specified below. Work also continued inter alia on the development of Best Available Techniques/Best Environmental Practices for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea and workshops were organized on seal fisheries interactions, sufficiency of measures as well as by-catch. The latter workshop being organized jointly by HELCOM and OSPAR.

HELCOM fisheries data interests

A draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea was finalized and agreed by the Fish Group, incorporating also comments from State & Conservation and a HELCOM/OSPAR workshop on by-catch organized in September 2019. The draft Roadmap was approved by HOD 57-2019 for adoption by HELCOM 41-2020.

Cooperation between Fisheries & Environment organisations

The Group has worked for closer regional cooperation between fisheries and environment issues in the Baltic Sea region, including cooperation between HELCOM, BALTFISH, BSAC 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 2019 HELCOM has been represented both at the BALTFISH Forum as well as meetings of the BSAC, while reciprocal sharing of information has continued.

BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture

The Group has progressed the work on BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture, to be completed by the end of 2020 as per the Terms of Reference and Work Plan for CG Aquaculture, as approved by HOD 55-2018.

Other issues of special interest

The group has developed a compilation of experiences and trials with alternative, more environmentally friendly fishing gears, published on a dedicated work space on the HELCOM Meeting portal in 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. Henri Jokinen.

[Expert/correspondence groups under Fish](#)

Task Force on Migratory Fish species (FISH-M)

Chair: *(No Standing Chair)*

The group has mainly worked in a themed workshop format. No workshops were organized in 2019, but the 7th Meeting of HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH.M 7-2020) will be organized on 10 March 2020 in Gothenburg, Sweden, in order to support the update of the BSAP in relation to migratory fish.

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 work on the development of BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture is continuing under the overall lead by Germany and Finland. The work has been conducted mainly by correspondence, but CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020 is being planned for June 2020 in Mariehamn, Åland Islands, Finland.

Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation

Chair: *(No standing Chair)*

The Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of assessment of the marine environment (EG Fishdata) completed its work on the draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea, which was subsequently agreed by the Fish Group and approved by HOD 57-2019.

[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 2019. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 18-2019 was held on 27-28 March in Hamburg, Germany. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 19-2019 was held on 28-29 October in St. Petersburg, Russia.

During 2019 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). An important topic for the WG in 2019 was the review of the current regional MSP framework to evaluate the implementation of the regional MSP roadmap, and MSP related guidelines. The WG was engaged in the review by the consultants who organised a workshop session on the review during the WG meeting 18-2019. The review contributed to the initial discussion on the update of the Baltic MSP Roadmap 2013-2020 at the WG meeting 19-2019. That same meeting agreed on the WG's Action Plan for the years 2020-2021. The proposed Action Plan was submitted to the HELCOM HOD 57-2020 for an approval. The progress in the BSAP update was presented to the WG in both meetings in 2019 to facilitate discussion on how MSP could be included in the BSAP. The WG meeting 18-2019 agreed to establish a task force to develop joint criteria for assessing cross-border coherence of the MSP plans. This will contribute to long-term follow up of the regional MSP commitments. The task force that is led by the HELCOM Secretariat was joined by Germany, Latvia, Sweden and Finland. During 2019 the WG continued the work on ecosystem-based approach in MSP. The WG was presented work that was conducted within the Pan Baltic Scope project on three topics: further development of the ecosystem-based concept and practice, application of the ecosystem-based considerations in strategic environmental assessments, and a methodology to map Green Infrastructure.

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 \(2018-2019\) \(EU co-funded\).](#)
- [Capacity4MSP \(2019-2021\) \(EU co-funded\)](#)

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 the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG by supporting data, information and evidence exchange for MSP processes with regard to cross-border/transboundary planning issues. During 2019, the ESG had two physical meetings in Copenhagen and Warsaw. The main achievements of the group for 2019 were the adoption of the HELCOM-VASAB guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure by HELCOM 40-2019. The HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG endorsed the ToR for the ESG and the ESG also focused its work on a roadmap to deal with input data. The ESG also worked on identifying relevant aggregated fisheries data for MSP. In addition, the group continued cataloguing MSP data access points provided by Contracting Parties for the use of BASEMAPS.