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HELCOM 41-2020

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Background

This document summarizes the status of the ongoing HELCOM projects and external projects with HELCOM involvement, with a focus on their main achievements and outcomes during 2019.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Information on on-going HELCOM projects and external projects with HELCOM involvement

1. [Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM PEG QA\), 2017-2019](#)

Chair: Ms. Iveta Jurgensone, Latvia

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary

The project is a continuation of '[Quality assurance of phytoplankton in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM PEG\)](#)' that was implemented in 2014-2016.

The main focus of the project is to ensure and maintain high quality standard of the international Baltic Sea regional phytoplankton monitoring within the HELCOM. This is achieved e.g. by organizing annual training courses (workshop), maintaining the PEG phytoplankton biovolume list, and organizing intercalibrations. The project leads the revision of the HELCOM monitoring guidelines for phytoplankton currently undertaken by the State and Conservation Working Group.

The project also serves as a platform for the review of phytoplankton indicators developed by Lead Countries and dedicates part of annual meetings to this topic. The project furthermore supports the definition of data requirements for phytoplankton indicators and appropriate data reporting format to ensure that the COMBINE database hosted by ICES provides the data needs for HELCOM phytoplankton indicators.

The project has contributed to the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) project, i.e. updated core indicators and provided information for the assessment tool and contributed to a survey of HELCOM knowledge and research needs for achieving good environmental status.

The annual meeting in 2018 was held in Gothenburg, Sweden on the 9-13 April 2018.

2. [Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring & assessment in the Baltic Sea \(HELCOM PEG QAA\), 2020-2022](#)

The project is a continuation of Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM PEG QA) which was implemented in 2017-2019.

The main target of the project is to ensure and maintain high quality standard of the international Baltic Sea regional phytoplankton monitoring within the HELCOM COMBINE Programme. Furthermore, the project acts as a platform to bring the work on phytoplankton indicators forward. This should be achieved by: maintaining annual training courses (workshop), maintaining the phytoplankton biovolume list, participation in intercalibration, maintaining the HELCOM guidelines for monitoring of phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass.

The project serves as a forum for discussion of phytoplankton indicators being developed in HELCOM and the results of the indicator evaluation of future HELCOM holistic assessments.

The main activities within the project are carried out at the annual workshops. The venue of the workshops will be circulated between the Contracting Parties and their marine laboratories. Suggested host countries are: Poland in 2020, Sweden (Umeå University) in 2021 and in 2022 Denmark. Intersessional activities will be organized if needed.

3. Future work on HELCOM indicators (HELCOM CORE INDICATORS), 2018-2021

Project Coordinator: Mr. Owen Rowe, HELCOM Secretariat

The HELCOM core indicators (as well as pre-core or those tested) form a vital part of the holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea. These indicators are included in the 2018 State of the Baltic Sea report, produced within the HOLAS II project. The indicators provide vital information for the report text and overall holistic assessment. Core indicators are used in the integrated assessments of biodiversity, eutrophication and hazardous substances, with other less developed indicators (e.g. pre-core or tested) included with a descriptive approach to support the overall report.

The indicators are based on regionally agreed threshold values, proposed by experts and endorsed at the higher levels of the HELCOM structure (e.g. via State and Conservation and at the Heads of Delegation). Currently there are 37 [indicators](#) that were used within the State of the Baltic Sea report, 15 of which address biodiversity, 9 of which address eutrophication, 2 of which address maritime issues, and 11 of which address hazardous substances. A number of these, for example the HELCOM indicator for metals, separately address multiple related compounds within a single indicator. Furthermore, there are several other indicator related topics (i.e. pressure or status evaluation) that were addressed within the State of the Baltic Sea report, though data or agreed threshold values may not have been available to produce a defined and agreed operational indicator at that time.

The catalogue of HELCOM indicators (core, pre-core, candidate and tested) has been reviewed both by a pre-filling exercise against policy requirements, and from a technical perspective via expert groups that host them. This process has also been supported by two workshops, the second of which developed workplans per indicator theme (e.g. benthic habitats, hazardous substances, etc) and identified what could technically be achieved by HOLAS III based on the proposed policy priority areas. The workplans per topic, the policy prioritization and initial work plans on interlinkages/cross-cutting across indicator themes are available in the meeting site for the [Second HELCOM Indicator workshop](#). Major outcomes of the Second HELCOM Indicator workshop are summarized in GEAR 21-2019 Document 5-7 ([Future work on HELCOM Indicators - Workplans per topic and Workshop output](#)) and step 5 (Execute – the technical development phase) in the overall process was approved by HOD 57-2019 ([Document 4-20 Future work on HELCOM Indicators, Outcomes paragraph 4.46-4.51](#)). Technical development work is currently underway within the expert groups and developments will be reported to relevant HELCOM Working Groups.

4. [The Seventh Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation \(PLC-7\), 2017-2020](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Lars Svendsen, Denmark

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, Professional Secretary

Pollution load data (PLC) is an integral part of HELCOM assessment system, focusing on annual and periodic assessments of inputs of nutrients and selected hazardous substances. The overall objective of the assessment is to follow up implementation of HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme through regular update of pressure indicator report on progress towards fulfilment of Maximum Allowable Inputs of nutrients (MAI) and an assessment of progress towards implementation of Country Allocated Reduction Targets (CART). Nonetheless, PLC-7 assessment has also a specific focus on source apportionment and effectiveness of measures to reduce input of nutrients and selected hazardous substances. PLC-7 assessment will be made in 2019 based on the monitoring data from 2017, which will also serve those Contracting Parties that are EU Member States for their next generation river basin management plans under WFD in 2019/2020.

The expected results are:

- The PLC assessment data set based on annual and periodic reports of water- and airborne inputs of nutrients and selected hazardous substances from 1995 to 2017 (periodic for 2017);
- The updated HELCOM Core Pressure Indicator on nutrient inputs (update of MAI fulfilment follow-up) covering data from 1995 to 2017;

- Updated scientific report on follow up progress toward national reduction targets for nutrients, CART follow-up assessment, covering data from 1995 to 2017;
- A thematic report on sources of nutrients;
- A thematic report on effectiveness of measures to reduce nutrients inputs to the Baltic Sea;
- A thematic report on input of hazardous substances;
- Executive summary of Seventh Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-7) including policy messages (also on CART);
- A report on intercalibration on heavy metals and nutrients between at least 1-2 laboratories from each Contracting Party conducting chemical analysis;
- Updated PLC guidelines on nutrients and selected heavy metals, including updated statistical methodologies used for PLC and MAI/CART assessments.

PLC-7 project has been launched in June 2017. Six project meetings have been organized since launching of the project.

The following project tasks have been recently accomplished:

- A report on intercalibration on heavy metals and nutrients between at least 1-2 laboratories from each Contracting Party conducting chemical analysis;
- Updated PLC guidelines on nutrients and selected heavy metals, including updated statistical methodologies used for PLC and MAI/CART assessments were approved by HELCOM 40-2019.

In addition, a scientific paper "[Statistical aspects in relation to Baltic Sea pollution load compilation](#)" has been recently published by DCE – Danish Centre for Environment and Energy.

Currently, the major project activity is producing assessment products based on compilation, verification and approval of the data on nutrient loads in 2017.

[5. Project for Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management \(HELCOM FISH-PRO III\), 2018-2023](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Jens Olsson, Sweden

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary, Mr. Markus Helavuori, Professional Secretary, Ms. Petra Kääriä, Assisting Professional Secretary

This project continues the work of the latest HELCOM FISH-PRO II project, which was completed in 2018. FISH-PRO III aims to support ecosystem-based management of coastal fish communities in the Baltic Sea coastal countries through further developing regionally harmonized monitoring and assessment methodologies, conducting assessments of coastal fish and by proposing ecosystem-based management measures.

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- Knowledge: to update and improve knowledge about occurrence, distribution, population and threat and/or decline of coastal fish based on all relevant data;
- Assessment and monitoring: to further develop different assessment and monitoring methodologies for coastal fish, including indicators with threshold and reference values;
- Recommendations: proposing ecosystem-based measures on management of coastal fish communities in the Baltic Sea for the consideration of HELCOM Fish and State and Conservation groups, as appropriate, and provide advice to national authorities and ongoing HELCOM work on implementation of coastal fish related actions in the BSAP.

During 2019 the project has *inter alia* completed the following activities:

- First meeting of the project, 12-14 February 2019, Helsinki, Finland;
- Publishing an update of the guideline for coastal fish monitoring in the Baltic Sea;

- Annual updating (data) of coastal fish CORE indicators for HELCOM coastal fish monitoring areas in the COOL database (<http://bio.helcom.fi/apex/f?p=108:5>);
- Continuation of the work on developing additional indicators for coastal fish (i.e. size-related indicators);
- Discussing the need for developing indicators for the status and extent of suitable habitats for coastal fish, and potential use of alternative data sources for coastal fish assessments besides fisheries independent coastal fish monitoring;
- Updating national information on the coastal recreational fisheries;
- Contribution to HELCOM knowledge and research needs;
- Dissemination of the work within HELCOM ACTION to the HELCOM FISH PRO III project.

During 2020 the work within the HELCOM FISH PRO III project will focus on the following activities:

- Second meeting of the project, 11-13 February 2020, Vilnius, Lithuania. The third meeting of the project is tentatively planned to be organized in Poland in February-March 2021;
- Annual updating (data) of coastal fish CORE indicators for HELCOM coastal fish monitoring areas in the COOL database (<http://bio.helcom.fi/apex/f?p=108:5>). Data for 2019 will updated by 30th of June 2019,
- Continuing the work on developing additional indicators for coastal fish (i.e. size-related indicators).
- Intermediate status assessment of coastal fish (data until 2019);
- Detailing additional activities of work of the HELCOM FISH PRO III project including i.a. potentially recreational fisheries impact evaluation, developing indicators for the status and extent of suitable habitats for coastal fish, develop the concept for assessing the status of coastal fish communities, and potential use of alternative data sources for coastal fish assessments besides fisheries independent coastal fish monitoring;
- Contributing to rephrasing of actions for the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan;
- Updating information and presentation of national projects on coastal recreational fisheries.

6. Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" Support 3 (HASPS 3), 2018-2020

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Florent Nicolas, Project Coordinator – Data Expert and Mr. Riku Varjopuro, MSP adviser

HASPS 3 aims to support objectives assigned in the Horizontal Action “Spatial Planning” of the EUSBSR and is co-funded by the EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. It is co-led by HELCOM and VASAB and it builds on the coordination activities started within the previous HASPS projects: HASPS (2015/2016) and HASPS 2 (2016/2018).

The main focus of the project is to improve coordination, stakeholder involvement and achievements of the strategic targets of the HA Spatial Planning by enhancing the links between the HA and implementation of the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap and the EU MSP Directive (for EU Member States), strengthening an outreach and integration of the HA to other regional and European activities, and promoting and enabling future flagship projects.

HELCOM is involved in the tasks of facilitating coordination and communication related to the work of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and potential links with other HELCOM Groups and sub-Groups. HELCOM will also coordinate the work to describe possible approaches for understanding coherence of Maritime Spatial Plans and to identify the minimum requirements for preparing and implementing MSP across the borders. These are tasks described in the work plan of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG for 2017-2019.

7. Coherent Linear Infrastructures in Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans (BalticLINes), 2016-2019

Project Coordinator: Mr. Manuel Frias, HELCOM Secretariat

Project Coordinator - Data Expert: Mr. Florent Nicolas, HELCOM Secretariat

GIS Application Developer: Mr. Andžej Miloš, HELCOM Secretariat

The overall objective of this Interreg funded project (March 2016 – February 2019) is to increase transnational coherence of shipping routes and energy corridors in Maritime Spatial Plans (MSP) in the Baltic Sea Region. This prevents cross-border mismatches and secures transnational connectivity as well as efficient use of Baltic Sea space. Thereby Baltic LINes helps to develop the most appropriate framework conditions for Blue Growth activities (e.g. maritime transportation, offshore energy exploitation, coastal tourism etc.) for the coming 10-15 years increasing investors' security.

HELCOM is leading the development of the [first tool to access Baltic Sea MSP data based on a Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure \(MSDI\)—BASEMAPS](#). BASEMAPS is the first step towards a more efficient way to access MSP data from the original sources via compliant online standard services and formats. Ultimately, BASEMAPS will contribute to a better management of the sea space and therefore to a better marine environment.

After the project identified and evaluated the data needs of MSP planners, the development of BASEMAPS started in 2017 and continued throughout 2018. The collection of data published by providers through standard services continued likewise with the help of project partners.

Significant improvements were implemented in BASEMAPS during 2018: a user-friendly administration panel which lets data providers add and edit data themselves. Also, the possibility to add and download data in standard GML vector format through WFS services was implemented

During 2018 three partner meeting were held in Tallinn (February), Gdansk (June) and Riga (November). The project was presented during a training course dedicated to MSP and sustainable blue economy in Panama in October organized by IOC/UNESCO.

8. Environmental impact of low sulphur ship fuel: measurements and modelling strategies (EnviSuM), 2016-2018

Project Researcher: Mr. Alexey Bakhtov, HELCOM Secretariat

The EnviSuM project, co-funded by the EU Interreg, studied the technical efficiency and socio-economic impacts of clean shipping solutions. The project addressed measurement and modelling strategies to assess present and future cost and the health and environmental effects of ship emissions in view of international emission regulations from the IMO. Project specific objectives were to provide policy makers and authorities with tools and recommendations for the development of future regulations benefiting the environment and public health in the Baltic Sea Region; to provide tested and analysed results on efficiency of the different clean shipping solutions; to assess present and future compliance costs, health and environmental effects of ship emissions in view of the IMO fuel sulphur limits that entered into force in January 2015 and to enhance sustainable development in the form of cost effective means for clean shipping.

A HELCOM/EnviSuM overview on the present status and prospects of the use of alternative fuels by ships operating in the Baltic Sea was approved by HOD 55-2018 and published on the HELCOM website on 2 April 2019

9. [Open-source tools for regional risk assessments for improved European preparedness and response at Sea \(OpenRisk\), 2017-2019](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Valtteri Laine, HELCOM Secretariat

OpenRisk was a two-year project focused on developing risk assessment (RA) tools for accidental maritime spills. The project is co-financed by the European Commission DG ECHO (Civil Protection Financial Instrument, project ECHO/SUB/2016/740178/PREV26), coming to an end in December 2018.

The lead partner of the OpenRisk project was HELCOM. The other partners of the project were the World Maritime University (WMU), MARIN (non-profit maritime research institution based in the Netherlands) and the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE). The project is also supported by the BONN Agreement (North Sea), the Copenhagen Agreement (Nordic seas), REMPEC (Mediterranean Sea) and the Lisbon Agreement as well as the Norwegian Coastal Administration – Kystverket.

The objective of the OpenRisk project was to take the first steps in developing a toolbox of joint and open methods that enable frequent assessments of spill risks from maritime accidents and adequacy of response capacity. The expected end-users of the project outcomes are Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) authorities of Europe.

The main deliverables of the OpenRisk project are as follows:

- Guideline for Pollution Prevention and Response on risk assessment and management based on the ISO 31000 Standard (published on the HELCOM website in October 2018);
- Baltic Sea Case Study (published on the HELCOM website in 12 May 2019);
- Four Inter-regional workshops, including reports.

10. [Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination \(RETROUT\), 2017-2020](#)

Project Manager: Mr. Henri Jokinen, HELCOM Secretariat

RETROUT is a 3-year (10/2017 – 9/2020) project focusing on sea trout rivers, sustainable trout fishing tourism and trout river restoration in the Baltic Sea area. The project has four Work Packages (WPs) addressing different aspects of the project scope, including the biological basis for trout fishing through stock and river habitat status assessment and management and river restoration practices, policy reform studies and dialogue, and actual development and promotion of coastal fishing tourism destinations. HELCOM is the lead of WP4 on status and management of sea trout rivers and stocks.

The project comprises 14 partners from the Baltic Sea countries (Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) including HELCOM as an intergovernmental organization. Stockholm County Administrative Board is the lead partner responsible for the overall project coordination. RETROUT is a flagship project of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Bioeconomy. The 3.2 Meur project is co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme under the Natural resources priority field.

The main aim of RETROUT Work Package 4 (WP 4), led by HELCOM, is to compile information on the status of sea trout rivers and stocks, evaluate different river restoration methods and technological solutions, and to recommend best practices and management options. The assessment of status of sea trout rivers and stocks will support national implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1 “Conservation of Baltic salmon and sea trout populations by the restoration of their river habitats and management of river fisheries”. The work on river restoration best practices will be synthesized in a guidelines report with pan-Baltic recommendations to be published by HELCOM, and it can contribute to the updating of HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1, with regard to addition of guidelines on restoration practices. Activities and progress within WP4 during 2019:

- HELCOM has continued to lead and coordinate the work of WP 4, including strategic planning, implementation, and external and internal communication.

- The task on “Assessment of sea trout river and stock status”, has advanced to an analyses and drafting phase.
- Most of the sea trout monitoring methods testing by project partners has been conducted reported by end 2019.
- During 2019 the activity “Joint evaluation of completed restoration projects” has advanced to analysis and drafting phase.
- By end 2019 the river restoration demonstration case in Lithuania and two cases in Sweden were finalized, and most of the other cases have entered final phases of implementation.
- The work on the river restoration best practices Guidelines report have started.
- Study visits to river restoration demonstration sites in Estonia (September 2019) and Sweden (October 2019).
- Partnership mid-term meeting in Gdansk, Poland, in May 2019.
- The third annual RETROUT partnership meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, in October 2018.
- HELCOM Secretariat have reported the progress of RETROUT to HELCOM FISH 9-2019 and FISH 10-2019.

[11. Communication support for BALEX DELTA 2018, 2017-2019](#)

Project Manager: Ms. Therese Larsson, Sweden

Communications Expert: Ms. Sanna Saari, HELCOM Secretariat

The HELCOM BALEX DELTA exercise has been conducted annually for nearly 30 years. The exercise is organized as a practical exercise of the response capability and alarm procedures of the Baltic Sea countries. The exercises are hosted by the Baltic Sea coastal countries in alphabetical order.

BALEX DELTA 2018 is a two-year EU funded (DG ECHO’s Civil Protection Mechanism Exercise Programme) project, led by the Swedish Coast Guard, running from 1 May 2017 to 30 April 2019. HELCOM was responsible for the publicity part of the project.

The BALEX DELTA exercise was held in Karlskrona, Sweden from 28 to 30 August, dealing with both oil and chemical spills, and with response exercises held at sea and also on shore. The 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 initial planning conference was organized on 23-24 January 2018 in Malmö, Sweden and a number of Core Planning Team meetings were also held in 2018. The BALEX DELTA 2018 After Action Review was organized on 13 November in Rostock Warnemünde, Germany. As the final event of the project, the BALEX DELTA 2018 Lessons identified and Final Conference will be organized on 9-10 April 2019 in Helsinki, Finland.

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

Project Manager: Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, HELCOM Secretariat

Project Coordinator: Ms. Kaisa Riiko, HELCOM Secretariat

Manure Standards is a two-year (10/2017–09/2019) project aiming to provide farmers, advisors, authorities and policy-makers enhanced capacity to govern and to turn manure use towards improved sustainability and resource-efficiency. The project is financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Manure Standards is coordinated by Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) and in addition to HELCOM it includes partners from 9 countries around the Baltic Sea.

The project has five work packages:

- WP1 Project Management and Administration

- WP 2 Guidelines for manure sampling and analysis
- WP 3 Guidelines for manure calculation systems
- WP 4 Impact assessment of implementing the new manure standards
- WP 5 Actions for implementing the new manure data on farms and in policies

HELCOM is leading work package 5. The 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting agreed to establish by 2016 national guidelines or standards for nutrient content in manure and develop by 2018 guidelines/recommendation on the use of such standards. The work package led by HELCOM aims at helping Contacting Parties to implement this commitment. HELCOM Agri group will also provide the link between the scientific results of the project and the authorities and policy makers as agreed in AGRI 3-2016.

In 2019, the project developed further the draft HELCOM Recommendation on the use of national manure standards which was discussed at AGRI 7-2019 and AGRI 8-2019 as well as HOD 57-2019 and finalized its outputs for more precise manure data and nutrient management.

[13. Completing management options in the Baltic Sea Region to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping \(COMPLETE\), 2017-2020](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Marta Ruiz, Associate Professional Secretary and Project Researcher: Mr. Manuel Sala Perez

[COMPLETE](#) (2017-2020) is an EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region project aimed at delivering knowledge and tools to implement HELCOM's roadmap for regional implementation of the outstanding issues on the BWMC in the Baltic Sea and also assist relevant authorities in implementing Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council, aiming to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The project consists of six working packages:

- WP1 Project Management and Administration
- WP2 Guidelines for surveillance and monitoring program of non-indigenous species
- WP3 Ballast water risk assessment and management systems
- WP4 Evidence-based options for biofouling management in the Baltic Sea Region
- WP5 Databases and user-friendly information support
- WP6 Stakeholder involvement and strategy development processes

HELCOM leads Activity A3.2: Advanced risk assessment tool under the HELCOM-OSPAR Joint Harmonised Procedure. Additionally, HELCOM is also involved in the following Activities (A):

- A2.4: Integrated monitoring system of non-indigenous species introductions by shipping and other vectors;
- A3.1: Target species selection criteria and risk assessments;
- A5.1: Information system on non-indigenous species and harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens;
- A6.2: Engaging stakeholders into development and use of project products;
- A6.3: Roadmap proposal for harmonized biofouling management in the Baltic Sea Region.

Activities in the project are evolving as planned. In 2019 the project informed of its status to MARITIME 19-2019 ([document 4-7](#)) and TG Ballast 10-2019 ([document 5-1](#) and [document 8-4](#)). It is to point out the project output already considered by MARITIME: (i) Concept for a Regional Baltic Biofouling Management Roadmap: (i) update of the target species selection criteria in the Joint Harmonised Procedure; and (ii) technical updates and modifications to the online decision support tool to replace the current decision support tool from September 2020.

In 2019, the project consortium met on 16-17 April, in Klaipeda, Lithuania and on 3 December, in Jurmala, Latvia. Moreover, the mid-term conference was held on 4-5 December, in Jurmala, Latvia. In addition, several on-line meetings were held among involved partners to discuss specific activities within the project. The next meeting of the project consortium is to be held in spring (April-May, tbc) 2020, in Rostock, Germany.

14. [Pan Baltic Scope, 2018-2019](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Owen Rowe, Project Manager

PanBaltic SCOPE is a two-year project coordinated by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, funded by EASME, and involves 12 main partners. The project brings together eight maritime spatial planning (MSP) authorities from seven HELCOM countries with the aim of developing a coherent national maritime spatial planning initiative in the Baltic Sea region, creating a lasting macro-regional mechanism for cross-border MSP cooperation.

Objectives include: building on previous MSP-related initiatives, establishment of a cross-border planning forum, facilitation of cross-border activities, development of approaches and tools to contribute to coherent MSP, careful integration of the ecosystem-based approach into MSP activities, clear examination of land-sea interactions, and opening a forum for sharing best practices and knowledge.

The Project is formed of interlinked work packages, with HELCOM taking a lead role in two activities within work package 1.2: Advancing the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach and data sharing. HELCOM is lead partner for the activities related to Cumulative Impacts (CI) and Economic and Social Analyses (ESA), and is a partner within the Data Sharing activity. HELCOM has furthermore cooperated with the task related to Green Infrastructure, in particular on the topic of [Essential Fish Habitats](#).

The project held its final conference in November 2019 and is in the final stages of carrying out the technical and financial reporting. The deliverables and information related to the project are available through the [project website](#). Certain aspects from the project, such as an online tool related to the Cumulative Impacts assessment will shortly be available on the HELCOM website (via the Map and Data Service, MADS).

15. [Finalizing of the project - Operationalization of the nutrient reduction scheme follow-up system \(MAI-CART OPER\), 2018-2019](#)

Project implemented by: Mr. Bo Gustafsson, Baltic Nest Institute Sweden, in cooperation with Mr. Lars Moeslund Svendsen, Danish Centre for Environment and Energy Denmark

The project has been implemented in accordance with the ToR and allocated resources. As far as only two thirds of the estimated project budget have been available only basic modules for operationalization of the work to follow up implementation of the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme were developed. PRESSURE 8-2018 agreed that remaining tasks of the HELCOM MAI-CART-OPER project have to be accomplished. Funds required for accomplishment of the project tasks have been received.

Specification of the implementation of the remaining tasks of MAI CART OPER project

The project will be accomplished in accordance with the initial terms of reference with minor modifications. The following remaining project tasks will be accomplished:

1. Finalizing of the module for statistical evaluations of trends and fulfilment and fulfilment.

Due to the complexity of the statistical methodology and involvement of manual operation e.g. data inspection and selection of parameter, full automation of the statistical evaluation of PLC data is not technically feasible. The following operations will be fully automated:

- Streamlined production of inputs to the statistical tool from the data handling tools (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) excluding any manual operations;
- Production of assessment graphics and tables combining time-series from the data handling tools and the results from the semi-manual statistical operations.

2. Integration of the modules into a software tool to enable their use in a single context.

The task is partly performed. The remaining modules will be integrated into the software tool except the Module for statistical evaluations of trends and fulfilment. As long as, statistical evaluation procedures imply manual operations the module will be integrated to the extent which is technically feasible.

3. Technical documentation.

The documentation will include description of elaborated procedures and produced codes as well as descriptions of user interfaces and tools. Publication of useful routines as open source resources, e.g. GitHub.com or other relevant homepages, is also possible.

Contract on implementation of the above listed tasks was signed in November 2018.

16. HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea Species 2.0 (BaltiCheck), 2018-2019

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Jana Wolf, Project Coordinator

The aim of the BaltiCheck project is to consolidate and make the data within HELCOM about species and their distribution publically available, link this information to the HELCOM Checklist information and develop an accessible database to store the consolidated data. Collating the data in a joined database will ensure access to region wide information with open access to the public.

The main steps for upgrading the HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea Species are:

- 1) a) Collate available temporal and spatial data on Baltic Sea species already available within HELCOM.
- b) Develop a simple open access database, populate the database with the available data and;
- c) A possible data call to complement the data in the database, which in turn feeds into the checklist.
- 2) Update the checklist. All the available information will be crosschecked with the data from the 2011 checklist.

The database itself will function as a backbone for information about species and their spatial as well as temporal occurrence in the Baltic Sea. Collating already available data will increase the usability of already provided data by regional and national institutions. Furthermore, the process can help identifying data-gaps and facilitate the aggregation of any missing information.

Overall the BaltiCheck project provides the necessary information to analyse individual species, entire species groups as well as biodiversity on a regional scale. Consequently, the database will be a valuable resource for modelling, analyses, assessment and evaluation work, including for biodiversity, biogeography, and future prospects under a changing climate and can be used for current as well as future projects at HELCOM and on a national level.

In 2019 the main activities for the project included collating all available data currently stored at HELCOM and collate data resulting from the data call initiated to cover missing species data primarily for benthic species. The [HELCOM biodiversity database](#), as well as a user interface, was developed and the database populated with all relevant data (almost 2 million observations). All existing and new available data was used for updating the previous Checklist of species occurring in the Baltic Sea.

17. Updating of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP UP), 2018-2021

At the HELCOM Secretariat: Project Manager, Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel

The overall goal of the project is to support and facilitate the work of the Contracting Parties to update the BSAP in line with the Ministerial mandate and the guidance agreed by HELCOM 39-2018 and the [Strategic Plan for the BSAP update](#) agreed by HOD 54-2018. The work within the project will be mainly carried out by the Secretariat and a dedicated project manager as well as Contracting Parties taking lead roles for specific topics or themes. The progress is continuously reported to HOD that provides the overall guidance for the BSAP update, see e.g. [document 3-1, HOD 57-2019](#).

In 2019, the so called 'formulation phase' was completed in which HELCOM Working Groups have focused on evaluating the status of implementing the current BSAP and Ministerial Declarations 2010 and 2013. In

2019 countries also reported on the implementation of a set of HELCOM Recommendations to support the BSAP update.

As part of the formulation phase, the structure of the BSAP has been reviewed and HOD 56-2019 agreed on a provisional adjustment to the BSAP structure and HOD 57-2019 on a provisional set of HELCOM objectives.

The analysis of sufficiency of existing measures to improve the state of the Baltic Sea was initiated by the HELCOM SOM Platform and ACTION project in 2019 and preliminary results will be available in March 2020. The HELCOM SOM Platform, which guides the SOM analysis held two meetings in 2019; [HELCOM SOM Platform 1-2019](#), [HELCOM SOM Platform 2-2019](#).

As part of the BSAP update the data base and associated visualisation of status of implementation of HELCOM actions will be improved through the further development of the HELCOM Explorer. HOD 57-2019 agreed on the further development of the functionality and interactive design which will be implemented by the Secretariat in spring 2020.

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

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, Project Manager

Ms. Kaisa Riiko, Project Coordinator

The SuMaNu project platform will gather and synthesize the best practices and recommendations on sustainable nutrient management from the following projects: Manure Standards (MS), Baltic Slurry Acidification (BSA), GreenAgri (GA) and PROMISE (PR). Also, the results of previous manure-related projects will be used.

Based on the project outcomes, joint policy recommendations will be created. The recommendations can be used nationally and they will feed into Baltic Sea region wide cooperation in HELCOM to promote sustainable nutrient management and enhance nutrient recycling. The joint policy recommendations will be made in cooperation with the target groups to make sure that they are useful for policy making and on the farm level. The SuMaNu project platform is co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

HELCOM is leading the work package 3 "Policy recommendations for sustainable nutrient management and recycling". The outcomes of the work package will support the elaboration of the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy by 2020 and the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan beyond 2021.

In 2019, the project started drafting the policy recommendations on nutrient recycling to support the elaboration of the strategy and compiled synthesis of good agricultural practices from previous projects.

[19. Platform on Integrated Water Cooperation \(BSR Water\), 2018-2021](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, Professional Secretary

Ms. Kaisa Riiko, Project Coordinator

BSR Water aims to enhance continuous cross-sectoral cooperation in water management field that lasts beyond the time frame of a single project, providing a possibility for transnational experience exchange, sharing of good practices and solutions, as well as a comprehensive overview of the current and future policy contexts and how they influence situation in the BSR countries.

One of the goals of the BSR Water project is to create an interactive online water management platform called Baltic Smart Water Hub for international knowledge and expertise exchange. The other goal is to utilize the outcomes and practical findings of the contributing projects to facilitate the long-term development of regional environmental policy and recommendations which will further serve to strengthen policy practice link in implementation of advanced water protection measures.

HELCOM responsible for the implementation of the WP4 of the project aimed at developing regional policy recommendations on nutrient recycling and developing recommendation on hazardous substances.

Project consortium consist of 8 partners: Union of the Baltic Cities, Sustainable Cities Commission c/o City of Turku; Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission (HELCOM); Berlin University of Technology; University of Tartu; Gdansk University of Technology; SYKLI Environmental School of Finland; Riga City Council; City of Helsinki.

[20. Clean Shipping Project Platform \(CSHIPP\), 2018 - 2020](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Florent Nicolas, Project Coordinator

Clean Shipping Project Platform (CSHIPP) project brings together projects and organisations focused on enhancing clean shipping in the Baltic Sea Region. The objective of CSHIPP is to increase the impact of and connect the dots between the six projects working for clean shipping. CSHIPP synthesises the projects' results to provide a more holistic perspective in a concise and easily comprehensible format.

The activities of CSHIPP revolve around two key themes: the environmental effects of shipping and the business potential of clean shipping in the BSR. By discussing these themes both separately and simultaneously, CSHIPP emphasises that environmentally friendly shipping and profitable business support rather than exclude one another.

HELCOM is leading the work related to drafting policy recommendations from the outputs of the different projects involved in the platform. The topics of the draft recommendations were discussed during a dedicated policy workshop held back-to-back to the second international Shipping and Environment Conference in Gothenburg on 4 and 5 September 2019. The draft recommendations will be submitted to the HELCOM MARITIME Working Group. HELCOM is also involved in building an online dissemination tool that will provide great amount of information and data to users such as researchers, students or general audience about clean shipping in the Baltic Sea Region.

[21. Actions to evaluate and identify effective measures to reach GES in the Baltic Sea marine region \(ACTION\), 2019-2020](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Owen Rowe, Project Manager

The ACTION project is a HELCOM coordinated project that is co-financed by the EU. The project started in January 2019 and will run for two years. The project is designed to contribute to the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021 and can also be used by HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States in updating and implementing their MSFD Programme of Measures.

The project will evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures, focusing on several pertinent topics, such as: by-catch of mammals and birds, impacts on the seabed, marine protected areas, and eutrophication. These topics have been chosen based on identified priorities in the region, for example some of the main pressures on the Baltic Sea ecosystem identified in the [HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report](#). In addition, the project will analyze the natural conditions that influence the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Baltic Sea region, including impacts of projected changes in climate. Furthermore, the project will develop an approach for regional sufficiency of measures (SOM) analysis to identify potential gaps in achieving GES, and estimate cost-effectiveness of tentative new measures to fill these gaps. The project aims utilize data driven analyses wherever possible, but expert based evaluations will complement existing data where required.

Work package 6 (SOM) has developed an approach for assessing the sufficiency of measures across the region and will present preliminary results to the upcoming meeting of the SOM Platform (3rd Meeting of the SOM

Platform). Work package (WP) 6 has also recently initiated work in WP6.1, where cost effectiveness analyses will be carried out. Finalized deliverables from other work packages will be made available to relevant HELCIOM Expert and Working Groups in the spring and autumn meetings during 2020. These include: WP1 – By-catch: identification of high-risk areas and mitigation measures, WP2 - coastal restoration measures, spatial fisheries management approaches and an overview of current knowledge related to the assessment of benthic habitats and the seafloor, WP3 – a methodology and proof of concept for assessing the management effectiveness of marine protected areas (MPAs), WP4 – test cases and trends in nutrient inputs and a comparison between Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) nutrient targets, and WP5 – an evaluation of natural conditions that cause lags in recovery towards GES, focusing on selected aspects of eutrophication, biodiversity and hazardous substances.

The project project partners include: Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Technical University of Denmark (DTU), Aarhus University (AU), Tallinn University of Technology (TTU), The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), University of Tartu (UT), and Klaipėda University, Marine Research Institute (KU)

[22. Initiatives to remove microplastics before they enter the sea \(FanLESStic-sea\), 2019-2021](#)

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Marta Ruiz, Associate Professional Secretary and Project Coordinator: Mr. Aaron Vuola

FanLESStic-sea is an EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region project aimed at decreasing and removing microplastics in the Baltic Sea.

FanLESStic-sea envisaged outputs are:

- A model to map, understand and visualize microplastic pathways that will be applied to the partners' cities and/or regions
- Piloting of new technology i) for filtering out microplastics; ii) sustainable drainage solutions as means for removal of microplastics; and iii) to remove microplastics from stormwater
- Defining innovative governance frameworks and engaging a large range of players for the implementation of coordinated and cost-efficient measures resulting in locally adapted investment proposals/plans for each partner's region
- Dissemination of project results, including reports on barriers and ways forward, to increase institutional capacity on up-stream and problem-targeted methods to remove microplastics.

The FanLESStic-sea project will run for 30 months (January 2019-June 2021).

The project partners are: Sweden Water Research (SE, Project Coordinator), Aalborg University (DK), Natural Resources Institute Finland (FI) , Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology (LV), Siauliai Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (LT) , Salt Lofoten AS (NO), Gdansk Water Utilities Ltd. (PL), Gdansk Water Ltd. (PL), State Autonomous Institution of the Kaliningrad region "Environmental Center "ECATKaliningrad" (RU), Luleå University of Technology (SE).

The Kick-off meeting of the project was held on 13-14 February 2019 in Malmö, Sweden. HELCOM is leading Activity 2.1, which output consists of a comprehensive report based on the inputs from each partner on existing and ongoing microplastic related research reports, initiatives and policies in each partner country, on EU level and globally. For that purpose, a questionnaire to compile information to draft the report was circulated to HELCOM EN-Marine Litter for their contribution on a voluntary basis. The [report](#), after commenting by Pressure, has been concluded and is available in the HELCOM website, together with a [summary for policy makers](#).

The rest of the activities in the project in 2019 mainly focussed on sampling and analysis of microplastics contents in the samples.

The project reported to PRESSURE on two occasions in 2019 ([document 3-2](#) to PRESSURE 10-2019 and [document 3-1](#) to PRESSURE 11-2019).

In addition to the kick-off meeting, the project consortium met on-line on three occasions in 2019 (19 June, 5 September and 19 December) and once physically (26-27 September, in Helsinki, Finland). The next meeting of the project consortium is to be held on 23-25 March in Gdansk, Poland.

23. Strengthening the capacity of MSP stakeholders and decision makers: Project platform Capacity4MSP, 2019-2021

At HELCOM Secretariat: Mr. Florent Nicolas, Project Coordinator – Data Expert and Mr. Riku Varjopuro, MSP adviser

The INTERREG-funded Project Platform aims to strengthen the capacity of maritime spatial planning stakeholders, policy- and decision-makers through intensified dialogue activities and amplifying gained knowledge in maritime spatial planning. Capacity4MSP builds on the results of the current and recently completed MSP projects and ongoing MSP processes in the Baltic Sea Region.

Capacity4MSP will create a practically oriented and interactive collaboration platform for knowledge exchange and intensified dialogue between MSP practitioners, policy- and decision-makers and other stakeholders. It will increase the visibility and impact of projects, build up potential synergies, deepen and widen gained know-how by synthesizing, amplifying and transferring the project outcomes to new practical solutions. By collecting and discussing lessons learned in previous MSP projects and national MSP processes, project will ensure efficient and value-added knowledge-transfer within and outside the Region and across various sectors and governance levels.

The main project outputs:

1. Synthesis report based on outcomes of relevant MSP-related projects in correlation with ongoing MSP processes and activities in the BSR countries
2. Identified support mechanisms for the implementation of the MSP including:
 - 2.1. Report on identified support mechanisms for the implementation of MSP encompassing conclusions
 - 2.2. User guide and visualization material of BASEMAPS available for MSP data providers
 - 2.3. A proposal of an institutionalised tool for a regular follow up of the regional MSP commitments in the BSR
 - 2.4. MSP roadmap for Russia
3. Thematic multi-level and cross-sectoral workshops
4. Planners Forum meetings
5. Integrated report on MSP stakeholder involvement engagement
6. Final conference jointly organised with the 4th Baltic MSP Forum

The HELCOM Secretariat leads the tasks 2.2 and 2.3. and takes part the Planners Forum meetings. The Lead partner is the VASAB Secretariat. The project partners are Aalborg University (DK), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SE), HELCOM, Ministry of Environment and Regional Development of Latvia (LV), Scientific and Research Institute of Maritime Spatial Planning Ermak NorthWest Limited liability

company (RU), Submariner Network for Blue Growth (DE), Russian State Hydrometeorological University (RU), Gdynia Maritime University (PL). The associated organizations: Finnish Heritage Agency, The Baltic Region Heritage Committee (FI), Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia (LV), Danish Maritime Authority (DK), Ministry of Justice, European Affairs, Consumer Protection and Equality (DE), HA Spatial Planning (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG), Maritime Office Gdynia (PL), Danish Maritime Authority (DK), Estonian Ministry of Finance (EE), Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation (PL), Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitalization (DE), Leontief Centre (RU), University of Tartu (EE), Federal Public Service of Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (BE), Finnish Ministry of the Environment (FI), Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (DE), The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (LT)

24. Revision of the HELCOM Response Manual, 2019-2020

At HELCOM Secretariat: Ms. Reita Waara, Project Researcher

The HELCOM Response Manual consists of three volumes and has been updated several times over the years. The present state of the Manual has been discussed during the meetings of the Response Working Group and its subsidiary groups, and the Contacting Parties have expressed views that the Manual should be more operational and easier to use. The present Manual is almost 450 pages long and there is certain overlap between the three volumes.

During the project, which was approved by HOD 55-2018 and financed by Finland and Sweden, the Manual has been thoroughly revised and updated, and Volumes 1 and 3 of the Manual were combined. The work was carried out in liaison with national experts and the HELCOM Response Working Group.

The draft revised Manual has been submitted to RESPONSE 27-2020 for consideration and it is expected to be finalized by RESPONSE 28-2020 for adoption by HELCOM 42-2021.