



Document title	Progress of work of the HELCOM subsidiary bodies, as well as expert and correspondence groups during 2020
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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 5-16.

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 22nd Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 22-2020) was held on 27-28 April 2020 as an online meeting. The informal session, targeted for informal exchange of Contracting Parties' national experiences in MSFD implementation, originally planned as part of the first half day of the meeting (27 April) was postponed. Identified urgent EU MSFD - related matters were considered under CG MSFD. The 23rd Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 23-2020) was held on 9-11 November 2020 as an online Meeting. An informal session on informal exchange of Contracting Parties' national experiences in EU MSFD implementation took place as part of the first half day of the meeting (9 November). In addition, an extra online meeting, the Intersessional Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR 21B-2020), was held as an online meeting on 27 February 2020 to review and subsequently approve concretized actions related to 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration paragraphs relevant for the GEAR group, to be included in the updated BSAP.

During 2020 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 24th meeting of GEAR will be held online on the 18-20 May 2021 and the 25th meeting of HELCOM GEAR will be held on the 8-19 November 2021, with the location still to be decided based on the pandemic situation at the time of the meeting.

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: Ms. Berit Hasler, Denmark

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 2020, the network organized two meetings. ESA network convened online meetings on 25 May and 18 September 2020. 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 served as a forum for information exchange on national ESA work and continued work on integrating ESA into HELCOM HOLAS III.

HELCOM Correspondence 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 2020 the work focused mostly on work linked to regional coordination of MSFD Programmes of Measures and preparations for HOLAS III and MSFD Art.8 reporting.

HELCOM Maritime Working Group (Maritime)

Chair: Ms. Susanne Heitmüller, Germany

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

An Intersessional Meeting of the Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 19A-2020) was held online on 14-15 April 2020. The 20th Meeting of the HELCOM Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 20-2020) was held online on 5-8 October 2020. Since HELCOM 41-2020 the Maritime Group has focused especially on:

Air Pollution from Ships

The dedicated expert group HELCOM Green Team (see below) pointed out the challenges related to financing, alternative fuels and onshore power supply (OPS) and MARITIME 20-2020 agreed to propose two specific measures on this matter to be included in the updated BSAP. In addition, MARITIME 20-2020 supported initiating a study to gain more knowledge on financing for sustainable shipping in the Baltic Sea region. As in previous years, Finland submitted a report on airborne emissions from ships in 2019, which also includes an estimate for the period 2006 - 2019.

Non-indigenous Species, biofouling 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 revision process of the HELCOM OSPAR Joint Harmonized Procedure (JHP) concluded with the approval of the revised JHP by HOD 59-2020. HELCOM is a partner in a dedicated Interreg project COMPLETE (2017-2021) which provides resources for further substantial work on reducing non-invasive species introductions via ships, in relation to ballast water -but also biofouling on ships' hulls. Biofouling has also been considered by the Maritime Working Group and JTG Ballast & Biofouling (whose terms of reference have been widened to address this topic) with the consideration of a draft Regional Baltic Biofouling Management Roadmap under development within the COMPLETE project.

Sewage from ships and port reception facilities

MARITIME 20-2020 took note of work related to the HELCOM Overview of sewage port reception facilities (PRF). Further improvement and update of the PRF Overview is to be considered in the next meeting of the Cooperation Platform on PRF (CP PRF) to be held on 4 May 2021.

Safety of Navigation

In 2019 the Maritime Working Group approved the [2018 Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea](#), which has subsequently been made available on the HELCOM website. As requested by MARITIME 18-2018, the Secretariat has been in contact with EMSA to get the shipping accidents data for 2019 through the EMCIP Database (for EU Member States). An MoU has been signed between EMSA and HELCOM for this purpose, but due to related administrative tasks and challenges caused by COVID-19, the Secretariat will only be able to finalize the draft report on shipping accidents during 2019 in the Baltic Sea region in spring 2021.

The updated HELCOM Harmonized Re-Survey Scheme was approved by MARITIME 20-2020.

Other issues of special relevance

The Maritime Working Group has provided input to the further development of the draft HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise in connection with continuous noise.

The Group further considered external project activities aiming at minimising the discharges of grey waters and food waste from ships into the Baltic Sea.

Reports and Other deliverables

- Annual HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea area in 2018

Projects

- [Completing management options in the Baltic Sea Region to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping \(COMPLETE\)](#), EU co-funded, 2017-2021.
- [Clean Shipping Project Platform \(CSHIPP\)](#) EU co-funded, 2018 – 2020

Expert groups under Maritime

Expert Working Group on Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS Data (AIS EWG)

Chair: Mr. Alar Siht, Estonia

The 31st Meeting of the Expert Working Group for Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS & Data (AIS EWG 31-2020) was held on 9-10 June 2020 as an online meeting.

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.

Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention (BWM Convention) and Biofouling (JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING)

Co-Chairs: Ms. Katja Broeg, Germany, and Mr. Ville-Veikko Intovuori, Finland

The eleventh meeting of the Group (HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 11-2020) was held online 26-27 November 2020.

During 2020 the Group focused on: (i) finalising the update of the Joint Harmonised Procedure (JHP); (ii) concluding the improvement of the JHP decision support tool; (iii) further developing the regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS) for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens (HAOP)(input from the COMPLETE project)

New Terms of Reference for the Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on the Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling, JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING, were agreed in 2020. The Work from the COMPLETE project is feeding into the activities of the Group. In this regard, in addition to the operationalisation of the EWS, the COMPLETE PLUS (April – December 2021) is to update the list of Baltic Target Species.

The next meeting of the Task Group is envisaged to be held in Spain in November 2021, if the COVID-19 situation allows.

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 fourth Meeting of the HELCOM MARITIME Sub-group on Green Technology and Alternative Fuels for Shipping (Green Team) was held on 22 September 2020 as an online meeting. The Meeting considered an update of the results from the Green Team reporting mechanism and method based on the traffic light idea and discussed ways to increase the response rate and spread of the survey.

The Meeting identified challenges hindering the development of the green shipping and alternative fuels deployment in the Baltic Sea area, including economic incentives (see "[Economic incentives to promote environmentally friendly maritime transport in the Baltic Sea region](#)") and reported to MARITIME 20-2020.

The next meeting of the Group (GREEN TEAM 5-2021) is planned for autumn 2021, tentatively in connection with the Donsö Shipping Meet.

Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV)**Chair: Mr. Andreas Holmgren, Sweden**

The eleventh Meeting of the HELCOM Group of Experts on Safety of Navigation (SAFE NAV 11-2020) was held on 13 May 2020 as an online meeting.

The meeting inter alia noted the [final report](#) of the Sea Traffic Management Validation Project in the Baltic Sea and that one of the general conclusions of the Project is that an interoperable system can be created for use by ships, authorities, ports and other relevant stakeholders. Thus, SAFE NAV 11-2020 agreed in general with a proposal by Sweden for an action in the updated BSAP to recommend sharing of voyage plans on a voluntary basis in the Baltic Sea region in order to increase maritime safety.

Denmark and Sweden informed that new routing measures, including traffic separation schemes, in the Skagerrak and Kattegat would enter into force 1 July 2020.

Draft revised Terms of Reference will be considered by SAFE NAV 12-2021, which is tentatively planned to be held in May 2021.

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

Chair: Mr. Lars Sonesten, Sweden

Vice-Chair: Mr. Ari Kangas, Finland

In the last year the Pressure Working Group convened two regular meetings, and four dedicated intersessional meetings. All meetings were held online. During the year 2020 the BSAP update consumed a lot of the Group's working time. Nonetheless, the Group worked on an update of the nutrient input ceilings, revision of the HELCOM Recommendation 23/5 on urban storm water management, update of the HELCOM Recommendation 36/2 on management of dredged material at sea and related Guideline, 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 the Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy. As part of its a routine work, the Group has been following up the implementation of the HELCOM nutrient input reduction scheme implementation of the HELCOM joint action on micropollutants in wastewater treatment plans, preparation of the consolidated reporting for the London Convention on dredged material and other activities related to the Group's ToR. In addition, the Group has led the ongoing revision process of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

The next meeting of the Group (PRESSURE 14-2021) will be held as an online meeting on 13-16 April 2020 and PRESSURE 152021 has tentatively been scheduled on the week 12-16 October 2021 in Sweden.

Reports and other deliverables

- [HELCOM Policy Brief on End of Life Boats \(ELB\);](#)
- [Best practices to reduce marine litter from net cutting waste;](#)
- [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;](#)
- [Estimation of Country-wise Reductions of Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition, achievable by 2030 through Implementation of the Gothenburg Protocol / EU-NEC Directive;](#)
- [Input of nutrients: potential to reduce input from point sources;](#)
- [Perfluorooctane sulfonate \(PFOS\) and other perfluorinated alkyl substances \(PFASs\) in the Baltic Sea – Sources, transport routes and trends;](#)
- [Polybrominated diphenyl ethers \(PBDEs\) in the Baltic Sea – Sources, transport routes and trends.](#)
- [Dioxins and PCBs in the Baltic Sea;](#)
- [Diclofenac in the Baltic Sea – Sources, transport routes and trends.](#)

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

- Update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2018);
- Evaluation of progress towards national nutrient input ceilings (2017).

Baltic Sea Environmental Fact Sheets:

- Atmospheric emissions of heavy metals in the Baltic Sea Region from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)
- Atmospheric deposition of heavy metals on the Baltic Sea from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)
- Atmospheric emissions of PCDD/Fs in the Baltic Sea region from 1990 to 2015 (2017)
- Atmospheric deposition of PCDD/Fs on the Baltic Sea from 1990 to 2015 (2017)
- Atmospheric emissions of PCB-153 in the Baltic Sea region from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)
- Atmospheric deposition of PCB-153 on the Baltic Sea from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)
- Atmospheric emissions of Benzo(a)pyrene in the Baltic Sea region from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)

- Atmospheric deposition of benzo(a)pyrene on the Baltic Sea region from 1990 to 2018 (updated 2020)
- Atmospheric nitrogen deposition to the Baltic Sea in 2018 (updated 2020)
- Waterborne nitrogen and phosphorous inputs and water flow to the Baltic Sea 1995-2018.

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;
- ENIREC 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).
- Work Package 4 of the HELCOM project Actions to evaluate and identify effective measures to reach GES in the Baltic Sea marine region (HELCOM ACTION)

Expert/correspondence groups under Pressure

Expert Network on Underwater Noise (EN-Noise)

Chair: Mr. Jakob Tougaard, Denmark

The network met online four times during 2020 and once physically, reporting back to the Pressure Working Group on their activities. The network also held a joint meeting with OSPAR experts on noise (OSPAR ICG Noise). During 2020 the network focused on finalising the drafting of the Action Plan on Underwater Noise (which is submitted to this Meeting for consideration), concluding the setting up of the HELCOM continuous noise database and soundscape planning tool, contributing to the EU discussion on assessment methodology for underwater noise indicators and further work on underwater noise indicators towards their operationalisation for HOLAS III.

Expert Network on Marine Litter (EN-Marine Litter)

Chair: None

The network met three times during 2020, with one of the meetings held as a Workshop on the Implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, RAP ML. During 2020 the network focused on revising the RAP ML, updating the marine litter monitoring programmes as part of the update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual process and further work on beach litter and seafloor litter indicators towards their operationalisation for HOLAS III. Additionally, national experts contributed to the implementation of the RAP ML: advancing on measures addressing ALDFG (in connection with related action in the current RAP ML) and EPS and XPS (towards a HELCOM Recommendation on the topic) as well as on the revision of HELCOM Recommendation on storm water management (topic to be considered by the Meeting), finalisation of the policy brief on disposal of End of Life Boats (ELB) and best practice guide to reduce inputs of cuttings of nets and cord to the marine environment, and accomplishment of the sea-based action addressing dolly ropes in the Baltic Sea.

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

RedCore DG met two times during 2020 (online).

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

- Draft update of the national nutrient input ceiling's values;
- Draft update of the HELCOM core indicator on nutrients input (1995-2019);
- Evaluation of the ENIREC II project report;
- Preparation to the ACTION project workshop on the measure under WFD which support implementation of MSFD and achievement of the BSAP targets;
- Drafting PLC-8 project proposal
- An draft policy message on progress towards nutrient input ceilings 1995-2017.
- Proposals for rephrasing of nutrient input related actions to be transferred to the updated BSAP; and other methodological aspects of assessment of input of nutrients into the Baltic Sea.

Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals (CG PHARMA)

In 2020 the Group worked in close cooperation with EN HZ. The Group focused on the support of the SOM platform work related to pharmaceuticals and expert assessment of the results of the questionnaire on the use of pharmaceutical in veterinary and handling of medical wastes. The Group also contributed to the HELCOM work on indicators, rephrasing of the actions which are 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 four online meetings during 2020, two regular meetings in January and September and two ad hoc online meetings. The ad hoc meetings took place in May and November and considered the revision of the Guideline to Recommendation 36/2 and BSAP update and actions related to seabed disturbance, respectively.

The work to update the Recommendation 36/2 and its Guideline continued throughout the year 2020. The latest update of the HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea was adopted by HELCOM 41-2020 in March 2020. At a later stage, Germany raised the issue of legally defined assessment areas used in the procedure of determining the dredged material management options in the Guidelines. The ad hoc Meeting of the Expert Network on dredging/depositing operations at sea (EN DREDS), convened upon the initiative of Germany on 26 May 2020, considered the proposal, developed it further and agreed on the wording to be included in the HELCOM Guidelines. PRESSURE 13-2020 (Outcome, para 6.2) considered and endorsed the changes to the HELCOM Guidelines and HOD 59-2020 agreed on the final approval December.

The group discussed the suggestions on the method to evaluate effects of dredging and depositing of dredged material on the sea floor, provided for HOLAS II in 2017. The Group agreed in general that the same methodology can be used for HOLAS III. Towards the end of the year the Group started the discussion on conversion factors of wet volume to dry weight. Sweden has raised this issue in the Group's meetings and this discussion will continue in 2021 with the aim of improving data quality and harmonizing reporting with the OSPAR Commission.

During 2020 the Group also successfully continued to carry out its annual tasks such as reporting annual data, verifying the national datasets, providing support to produce BSEFS for Depositing of dredged material in the

Baltic Sea and verifying the consolidated report to LC/LP. An updated dataset was published in HELCOM Map and Data Service during 2020 to cover years 2006-2018.

Expert group to draft the regional principles and risk assessment framework for management of internal nutrient reserves (ad hoc Group MINUTS)

Chair: Vilja Klemola, Finland

The Group had eight online meetings in 2020. 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 a 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 and Guideline have already been presented at PRESSURE 12-2020, PRESSURE 13-2020, HOD 58-2020 and HOD 59-2020. HOD 59-2020 decided to prolong the Group's mandate until June 2021 with the view that the final proposal for the risk assessment framework will be presented to HOD 60-2021 with subsequent adoption on the Ministerial Meeting in October 2021.

HELCOM Response Working Group (Response)

Chair: Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Finland (until end of 2020), Mr. Bernt Stedt, Sweden (from 2021)

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Ojars Gerke, Latvia, and Mr. Alexander von Buxhoeveden, Sweden (until end of 2020), Mr. Torben Iversen (from 2021)

The 27th meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2020) was held on 26-28 February 2020 in Vejle, Denmark and the 29th meeting of the Group (RESPONSE 29-2020) was held on 3-5 November 2020 as an online meeting in line with HELCOM policy on COVID-19.

The 29th meeting of the Response Working Group (RESPONSE 29-2021) is tentatively scheduled for September 2021 to be hosted by Estonia or online depending on the COVID-19 situation.

Response Operations

In 2020 the Contracting Parties shared information on recent response operations.

Response Exercises including evaluation

The Group has worked on optimising the utility of HELCOM response exercises developing a HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP), which was approved by RESPONSE 28-2020. The implementation of the HREP is expected to begin at BALEX 2021 to be hosted by Finland. Consequently, the Exercise Evaluation Team (EET) will be replaced by the Response Exercise Development and Monitoring Team (HEDMOT). The HREP has been agreed to remain as a continuous task in the Work Plan of the Response Working Group.

In 2020, the annual BALEX DELTA exercise was conducted by Estonia on 26 August 2020 off the coast of Tallinn. The exercise was affected by the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting e.g. in a lower number of participants and foreign ships not being allowed to call into port. The BALEX 2021 exercise will take place near Kotka, Finland during the last week of August 2021.

Response capacity developments

In 2020 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 work on revising all three volumes of the HELCOM Response Manual will come to an end at HELCOM 42-2021 when the draft revised HELCOM Response Manual and the draft Joint Multi-Regional Marine HNS Response Manual are expected to be adopted. The current manual Volume 1 has grown over the years and streamlining as well as combining it with Volume 3 on shore response will 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 WestMOPoCo project together with, e.g. the Mediterranean (REMPEC) and North Sea (Bonn Agreement).

Recommendations

In 2020 the Working Group continued its review of all valid 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 28-2020 agreed that HELCOM Recommendation 17/12 “Measures to abate pollution by oil and other harmful substances in cases of grounding, collision, sinking of a ship or other maritime casualty” should be withdrawn. HOD 59-2020 supported this and HELCOM 42-2021 is expected to withdraw the Recommendation.

RESPONSE 28-2020 approved the draft revised HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 “Integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea Area”. HOD 59-2020 approved the draft revised Recommendation and HELCOM 42-2021 is expected to adopt it.

Reports and other deliverables

The HELCOM Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2019 was published in November 2020.

REPOSE 28-2020 agreed that it is premature to publish Volume 1 of the draft Submerged Assessment on warfare materials and agreed on a proposed way ahead including drafting of new Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED) for consideration by RESPONSE 29-2021. Progress has not been made on Volume 2 of the draft Submerged Assessment on wrecks in the Baltic Sea.

Projects

- Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation (WestMOPoCO) (2018-2021)

Expert groups under Response

Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance (IWGAS)

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik, Estonia

In 2020 the annual meeting of IWGAS was cancelled due to COVID-19 but the tasks were considered by correspondence during spring 2020 in order not to delay important ongoing processes.

The Group inter alia compiled the annual report on spills observed via aerial surveillance in 2019 and updated the satellite coverage requirements in the Baltic Sea

The 2021 IWGAS meeting is scheduled for June 2021 to be held online.

Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE Network)

Chair: Ms. Marit Mätik, Estonia (until end of January 2021), Mr. Jens Rauterberg, Germany (from February 2021)

The fifth meeting of the HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE Network 5-2021) was held on 27 January 2021 as an online meeting in line with HELCOM policy on COVID-19.

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 and the development of the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP). The Group also updated its Work Plan for 2022-2023 with the view to have it submitted to RESPONSE 29-2021 for approval.

The sixth meeting of the Group (SHORE Network 6-2022) is scheduled for early 2022. An informal online meeting is tentatively to be held on 8 November 2021 to plan the future work in accordance with the updated Work Plan.

Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR)

Chair: Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm

The 15th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 15-2020) was held as an online meeting on 26 May 2020, EWG OWR 16-2020 was held as an online meeting on 22 September 2020 and EWG OWR 17-2021 was held as an online meeting on 9 February 2020.

The Group has shared information on national OWR planning and preparedness activities and compiled a report on these activities for years 2019-2020 using the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), which was approved by RESPONSE 28-2020. The Group has further compiled information on authority responsibilities in the Contracting Parties related to OWR, NGO-authority relationships and available OWR equipment stockpiles.

An online seminar on early incident response for cross-border wildlife incidents was held under the auspices of EWG OWR on 15 September 2020. The seminar was jointly prepared by Germany and Sea Alarm, in partnership with the HELCOM Secretariat. A online EWG OWR seminar on euthanasia will be held on 21 April 2021, organized by Sea Alarm an WWF.

Expert Group on environmental risks of hazardous submerged objects (SUBMERGED)

Co-Chairs: Mr. Jacek Bełdowski, Poland (munitions) and Mr. Jorma Rytönen, Finland (wrecks)

No official Meetings of the Submerged Expert Group were held in 2019.

The Group has worked via email correspondence since the last meeting (SUBMERGED 9-2020) in January 2020. Progress has been made on developing the HELCOM Submerged Assessment. However, RESPONSE 28-2020 agreed that it is premature to publish Volume 1 of the draft Submerged Assessment on warfare materials and agreed on a proposed way ahead including drafting of new Terms of Reference for SUBMERGED for consideration by RESPONSE 29-2021.

Progress has not been made on Volume 2 of the draft Submerged Assessment on wrecks in the Baltic Sea.

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

The 12th meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation, (STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020) was convened on 11-14 May 2020, and the 13th meeting (STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020) was convened on 5-9 October 2020. Both meeting were organized as online meetings, due to COVID-19.

In addition to the biannual meetings the working group convened four intersessional online meetings (STATE & CONSERVATION 12A-2020, STATE & CONSERVATION 13A-2020, STATE & CONSERVATION 13B-2020 and STATE & CONSERVATION 13C-2020). These meetings have focused on supporting the process to update the Baltic Sea Action plan, updating the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impact index (BSPI/BSPII) map layers and development of the MPA LIFE project proposal.

During 2020 the work under State & Conservation focused on work to support the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, including the review of new proposed actions and rephrasing of existing actions. The WG worked on the scoping and planning for HOLAS III and associated processes, including consolidation and further development of indicators, preparing infrastructure to support the data flows for HELCOM indicators and assessment and further developments of methods for assessment. The conservation-related topics included further work 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 in 2021. The WG prepared reporting formats, agreed on reporting intervals and initiated reporting on several recommendations. The monitoring session focused on the process to review and revise the HELCOM Monitoring Manual, a process which came to its conclusion in 2020, as well as implementing HELCOM Recommendation 19/3 and discussing issues related to improving data flows.

The next meeting State and Conservation (HELCOM STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021) will be held online on 3-7 May 2021, and STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 has been scheduled for 4-8 October 2021, the locations remains open and will be decided based on how the Covid-19 situation progresses.

Reports and other deliverables

- Checklist of Baltic Sea Macro Species;
- HELCOM Indicator Manual;
- Updated HELCOM Monitoring Manual and Programmes;
- 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), HELCOM Data Flow Project (2020-2021) and the HELCOM Assessment Method Development Project (MetDev) (2021-2022);
- HELCOM biodiversity, litter, underwater noise and effective regional measures for the Baltic Sea (HELCOM BLUES) (2021-2022);
- 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 two online meetings during 2020 and the first online meeting of 2021 was held in late-February. All three of these meetings devoted an additional period of time to discussion and planning related to the assessment of biological effects: [EN-HZ 12-2020](#), [EN-HZ 13-2020](#) and [EN-HZ 14-2021](#). The work to date has focused on key areas identified in the Terms of Reference of the Group and also issues lifted in the indicator review process (e.g. assessment needs by HOLAS III). The following major issues were worked on during the previous three meetings:

- Development towards a Copper indicator (relevance to offshore inputs);
- Review of issues related to threshold values;
- Improved application of supporting parameters in the assessment;
- Sediment cores and their application in providing an overview of hazardous substances;
- Development of missing monitoring and assessment guidelines;
- A process to review and identify priority substances;
- The development of a proposal for wide-scope screening of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea marine environment (recently funded via NEFCO);
- Development towards a viable biological effects assessment;
- Improvements in assessment tools (including links with the Baltic Data Flows project).

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. There was significant activity during 2020 from this group, in particular to follow up on work related to indicators (e.g. following up on the work plan devised during the future work on HELCOM indicators process). The Group was strongly represented at the [HELCOM ACTION 2.2 workshop](#) that focussed on work developed under the HELCOM ACTION WP2, including: an overview of pressures and assessment approaches for benthic habitats, displacement of fisheries activity and potential benefits on benthic habitats, and coastal restoration measures. [EN BENTHIC 3a-2020](#) focussed on issues not possible to cover at the previous meeting, primarily reviewing the work plan of the Group. To follow up on work related to indicators (and discussion at State and Conservation on this issue) a workshop, the First Indicator Workshop of the HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic Habitats ([EN BENTHIC WS1-2020](#)), was planned to initiate the work towards an improved assessment of benthic habitats by HOLAS III. This workshop was moved online at the last minute due to travel restrictions but served to provide a short overview of the current status and established a pathway for the next steps. The Second Indicator workshop of HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic Habitats ([EN BENTHIC WS2-2020](#)), focussed heavily on the Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes HELCOM indicator (CumI) and identified issues where changes or clarifications may be required. The workshop identified a series of clear steps for intersessional work in preparation for the next meeting. The 4th meeting of the HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic habitats (EN BENTHIC 4-2020) followed up on the developments carried out on the CumI indicator and identified further development work, as well as other issues or relevance to the Group (e.g. developments in other relevant groups/work strands and possible developments related to the overall

assessment of condition of benthic habitats). The intersessional work on these issues will be followed up on at EN-BENTHIC 5-2021 that will take place in 9 March, with a focus on agreed indicator deadlines and development work towards HOLAS III. The Second benthic mapping workshop planned for 2020 was postponed due to travel restrictions as it was considered that the process required an in person meeting, or significant re-planning, to achieve its goals.

Intersessional Network on Eutrophication (IN-Eutrophication)

Chair: Ms. Vivi Fleming, 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 three online meetings in 2020 and has held one online meeting in March 2021. 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 further developing indicators for eutrophication assessment, including a common shallow water oxygen indicator with an aim to include the indicator in the HOLAS III assessment. The Group will organize a dedicated workshop for oxygen indicator development in Spring 2021. 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 Group's annual meeting planned at Helgoland in 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and the date for an online meeting replacing this meeting has not been scheduled. An intersessional JWGBIRD meeting on the Marine Bird Habitat Indicator was held online on 3 November 2020 and was attended by 22 experts. The topics the Group works on during the annual meetings are agreed jointly by HELCOM, OSPAR and ICES. The work programme provides a thematic overview of the work carried out by JWGBIRD, covering databases and data products, monitoring, assessment, ad hoc consultation and the ICES advisory process. Tasks under each theme will be specified on an annual basis. JWG BIRD collaborated, as needed, with national leads and co-leads of HELCOM indicators related to seabirds and with national leads of HELCOM recommendations, including but not limited to: Recommendation 34E-1 'Safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea', and Recommendation 37-2 'Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM red list'. The Group can also work on other HELCOM projects that support the commitments mentioned above.

In 2020 the work has included planning for the assessment of breeding and wintering birds for HOLAS III, furthering work on bycatch and setting up specific subgroup work on bird migration. Other activities of the Group have included the participation of JWGBIRD experts in EN CLIME, the finalization of the guidelines for monitoring seabirds at sea, review of the SOM report, writing proposals for the Science Agenda and BSAP, and scoping of external experts in the planned sub-group on bird migration. The timing of the Group's next meeting is to be decided.

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

Chair: Ms. Tamara Zalewska, Poland

The 10th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea (MORS EG 10-2020) was held on as an online meeting.

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 2020, the Group worked e.g. on providing annual updates and quality assuring the environmental and discharge databases. The Group also started the process to updated radioactivity core indicator threshold values according to the updated BSAP objectives (dose-based threshold values). For that purpose, a specific online meeting (MORS EG10A-2020) was held during autumn.

Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA)

Chair: Anders Galatius, Denmark

Vice-Chair: Morten Tange Olsen, Denmark

The 14th meeting of the Expert Group on Marine Mammals was held online on 22–24 September 2020. The main focus of work of the Expert Group during 2020 was on drafting new guidelines for monitoring, indicator development to support HOLAS III and issues related to management of seals and human induced pressures. The Group also worked to provide input to the Sufficiency of Measures analysis 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 Porpoise team and the Marine Mammal Health Team. The Marine Mammal Health Team is planning to host a Workshop with practical sessions focusing on harmonizing monitoring practices when COVID-19 travel restrictions are lifted. The next meeting will be held on 14-16 September 2021 and has been provisionally decided to be held in Odense, Denmark, depending on the

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

Co- Chairs: Markus Meier, Baltic Earth, Jonas Pålsson, 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 2020 the Group has produced the first peer reviewed draft Baltic Sea Climate Change Fact Sheet containing concise key messages on climate change effects on 34 parameters, identified by EN CLIME as being of relevance for science and management. In 2020, the Group held four online meeting.

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 experience between managers, facilitate mutual understanding and foster the development of, and actively contribute to achieving, 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 from 9-12 September 2020 in Vaasa, Finland. In 2020 the planned physical workshop was cancelled due to restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

HELCOM Expert Group on sturgeon remediation (EG STUR)**Chair: Mr. Jörn Gessner, Sweden**

The overall scope of the Expert Group is to facilitate Baltic Sea regional cooperation for all activities related to sturgeon recovery as outlined in the Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan (BSSAP). The BSSAP covers a period of 10 years (2019 – 2029).

With the approval of the Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan in April 2019 and the foundation of the Expert Group (EG), HELCOM has taken two important steps towards the long-term goal of the restoration of Baltic sturgeon populations in the Baltic Sea and its main tributaries.

The EG held its inauguration meeting in Pärnu in June 2019, where the Chair of the Group was elected, and the strategy of the Group and its mode of operation were discussed. Additionally, the Group reviewed the BSSAP and set priorities for its work in 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, through the co-chair of S&C the Group submitted supporting documents for the revision of the BSAP as well as asking HELCOM for support in contacting the European Commission in an attempt to increase the focus of the European Fisheries and Maritime Fund (EMFF) on species recovery measures as well as on the bilateral or multilateral collaboration between countries, an issue that is also pending under the EU-Life Programme.

During the annual meeting of EG STUR between January 23-25th 2020, at the ABBA Hotel, Berlin, the Group further collected information on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan in the signatory countries while at the same time prioritizing the activities that are of short term relevance to the fulfilment of the plan. Emphasis was set on the development of guidelines which will be carried out in a collaborative effort with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, a group of volunteers under the PA6 of the EU Danube Strategy. The guideline development groups will be further strengthened by collaborators from the Adriatic-Ionian region and from western European collaborators. In the first instance, these guidelines will focus on the Actions 1-5 (Category 1 and 2). Further actions will primarily target stakeholder involvement and outreach.

To further increase the outreach of the Group in accordance with the Items 14-16 of the BSSAP, the groups started an Instagram, Facebook account to provide current information on the measures undertaken and to facilitate contacts with the stakeholder groups (see the joint EG Accounts: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Baltic-Sturgeon-Conservation-Recovery-105315531028998/> and Twitter: <https://twitter.com/balticsturgeon/>)

HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri)

Chair: Ms. Sari Luostarinen, Finland

The Ninth Meeting of the Agri Group on 30-31 March 2020 and the Tenth Meeting on 4-5 November 2020 were organized online. The Agri Group also held two intersessional meetings related to the update of the BSAP. The Group continued the revision of the Annex III part II of the Helsinki Convention as well as drafting the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy. The HELCOM Workshop on nutrient recycling measures was organized on 5-6 February 2020.

Projects

- [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

Vice-Chair: Ms. Katarzyna Kaminska, Poland

The Eleventh Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 11-2029) was held on 11-12 March 2020 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

FISH 12-2020 was held on 11-12 November 2020 as an online meeting.

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.

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 adopted 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 2020 HELCOM was represented both at the BALTFISH Forum as well as meetings of the BSAC, while reciprocal sharing of information has continued.

Other issues of special interest

The Fish 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 and to be updated on a continuous basis.

Projects

The EU-funded RETROUT project "Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination" (2017-2021), 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 mainly works in a themed workshop format, but the 7th Meeting of HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH.M 7-2020) was 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)**Co-Chairs Mr. Orian Bondestam, Finland and Ms. Anita Künitzer, Germany**

The work on the development of BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture is continuing under the overall lead of Germany and Finland. The work has been conducted mainly by correspondence, and one meeting, CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020 was held as an online meeting on 25-26 June 2020.

Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation**Chair:** (No standing Chair)

Since 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 Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea, no meetings have been held.

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

Co-Chairs: Mr. Joacim Johannesson, Sweden and Ms. Katarzyna Krzywda, Poland (until end of 2020)

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

The joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG met two times in 2020. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 20-2020 was held on 1-2 April 2020 and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 21-2020 was online on 12-13 November. Both meetings were held online.

In addition to the biannual meetings, the Working Group has convened three intersessional online meetings since HELCOM 41-2020 to further work on the BSAP update (HELCOM-VASAB 20B-2020 on 18 June 2020) and on drafting the Regional MSP Roadmap (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 20A-2020 on 15 May 2020 and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 21A-2021 on 3 February 2021).

The HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG has initiated the update of the Regional MSP Roadmap. Based on the discussions among the WG and HELCOM HODs defining the scope of the new Regional MSP Roadmap, a Drafting Group was elaborated to work on the actions and objectives. Three meetings were organized for the Drafting Group since HELCOM 41-2020. The draft of the Regional Roadmap for Maritime Spatial Planning 2021-2030 is submitted to HELCOM 42-2021 in the [document 5-10](#). An important topic for the WG was also the BSAP update: the process was presented to each WG meetings to facilitate discussions on how MSP could be included in the BSAP as horizontal actions. The WG discussed MSP related actions that were taken into account by the BSAP Drafting Group and HOD Meetings, in line with the BSAP update workplan. The WG encouraged to use the outcome as well as current activities of MSP-related projects when discussing the new Regional MSP Roadmap and the BSAP update.

Since HELCOM 41-2020, the work of the task force on coherence of planning, led by the HELCOM Secretariat was also carried on. The nature of the final document was discussed by the WG and agreed that a checklist to evaluate cross-border coherence would be a valuable output. The WG continued the follow up of the national MSP developments and the Coordination of MSP related projects and events as well as the work carried by the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group. The WG was informed on the update of the EUSBSR Action Plan. The Working Group acts as steering body for the Policy Area “Spatial Planning” of EUSBSR which was previously a Horizontal Action.

Projects

- [HA Spatial Planning Support 3 \(2018-2020\) \(EU co-funded\)](#);
- [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)

Chair: Ms. Kristine Kedo, Latvia.

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. The main achievement of the Group was released in 2019 in the form of the HELCOM-VASAB guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure which has been the basis also for developing joint European data model for MSP output data. After this, the Group has focused on making sure availability of both input and output data in BASEMAPS map portal hosted by HELCOM secretariat. During 2020, the Group held two online meetings workshops, including a dedicated session for national data providers on providing data to BASEMAPS supported by Capacity4MSP project.