



Notes from the HELCOM ACTION project workshop on MPA network effectiveness (HELCOM ACTION WS3-2020)

Introduction

1. In accordance with the project plan for the HELCOM project on *actions to evaluate and identify effective measures to reach GES in the Baltic Sea marine region* (ACTION project) work package 3 on *Marine protected areas (MPAs): developing a method to assess management effectiveness of MPAs, assessing how MPAs contribute to achieving GES in the Baltic Sea* a workshop on MPA network effectiveness (HELCOM ACTION WS3-2020) was convened on at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat, Katajanokanlaituri 6 B, Helsinki, Finland on 5 – 6 February, 2020.
2. The workshop addressed topics from the HELCOM ACTION project work package 3 on MPA network effectiveness. The results of the MPA management effectiveness assessment questionnaire distributed among HELCOM Contracting Parties was presented. The workshop also focused on an exchange of information and discussion on how using existing policy instruments (e.g. the Baltic Sea Action Plan, the Habitat and Bird Directives, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) to support improving the state of the Baltic Sea. The workshop also considered possible recommendations and actions which can support the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and the Baltic MPA network.
3. The workshop was attended by experts from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden. WWF Finland and CCB took part as observers to HELCOM. The List of Participants is contained as **Annex 1**.
4. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Darius Daunys, Lithuania. Ms. Jannica Haldin, HELCOM Professional Secretary acted as secretary of the Workshop.

Agenda item 1: Review of results – application of management effectiveness (ME) assessment method and validation of approach.

1. The ME assessment method developed within the work package of the ACTION Project was presented by the WP leads as contained in **Presentation 1**.
2. The participants discussed the approach developed for ME assessment, its benefits, barriers, challenges and possible future developments of the method.
3. The results of the survey on the ME of the Baltic Sea MPA network carried out by the ACTION Project was presented by the WP leads as contained in **Presentation 2**.
4. The Workshop recognized that the current assessment and associates survey function as a proof of concept. The participants agreed that the method in its current format provides a good platform to assess management performance and that it can, when more information becomes available, be broadened for the assessment of management effectiveness covering the full management cycle.
5. The participants developed a number of recommendations to support future developments of the method and the effective and regular application of ME assessment method. The recommendations are contained in **Annex 2** of this outcome.



Agenda item 2: Expert-based evaluation of the contribution of MPAs in achieving Good Environmental Status (GES).

6. The participants took note of the introductory presentation on how existing policy instruments (e.g. the Habitat and Bird Directives, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) complement each other with respect to spatial protection measures (**presentation 3**).
7. The participants of the workshop were invited to provide their expertise regarding how MPA network can contribute to achieving GES in the Baltic Sea area, with a particular focus on biodiversity aspects, what is currently missing for the MPA network to contribute more to GES and how identified gaps could be filled to ensure that the MPA network provide a higher contribution towards GES? Other aspects such as how MPAs contribute to reducing pressures affecting the species and habitats were also considered.
8. The Workshop aggregated the identified gaps and solutions under broader headings and produced an overview of the main topics as included in **Annex 3** of this document. In addition, the workshop concluded that in order to reach GES the MPA network needs to be fully coherent, on the regional scale, and that scientific reference areas (no-use MPAs) need to be included in the respective countries national MSFD Programmes of Measures.
9. The Workshop recommended that a regional scoping/best practice workshop on how to implement no use zone MPAs be arranged under the auspice of HELCOM.

Agenda item 3: Development of, and discussion on, recommendations for an effective MPA network and MPA management approach.

1. The Workshop used the gaps and solutions identified in session 2 as a basis when considering possible input to the updating of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.
2. The Workshop agreed on and prepared three synopsis for new actions and measures for the Baltic Sea Action plan update as contained in **Annex 4**.



Annex 1. List of Participants

Name	Organization	E-mail address
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Annex 2 Recommendations for the development and use of the Management Effectiveness assessment method for the Baltic Sea region

1. The method elaborated by the ACTION project follows the common framework of management effectiveness assessments and provides interpretable results. The method in its current format provides a good platform to assess management performance. It can be broadened for the assessment of management effectiveness covering full management cycle.
2. Method is suitable for management effectiveness analysis of the regional MPA network. Addition of integration algorithm can be considered to enhance the method applicability for assessment of an individual MPA and/or for assessment of the network on a sub-regional level, at the costs of increased assessment effort.
3. The amount of effort to fill in information required by the method for MPA ME assessment has to be compromised with the level of requested details. It is recommended that method stays implemented in the online format and can be applied by MPA managers without extensive guidance, but clear explanation of key terms used in the questionnaire (e.g. “relevant pressure”, “enforcement” etc.) will be important in further assessments.
4. Alternative proposal responding to comment: The method allows incorporation of weighting the importance of human activities and increase in possibility of detecting the largest perceived or proved impacts. Such extension, however will require increased assessment effort, higher level of expertise, more subjectivity and loss in comparability of MPA’s at the network scale.
5. The method focuses on Habitat Directive, Bird Directive and HELCOM Red Listed conservation features, however it can be extended to include other ecologically relevant conservation features.
6. The method allows extension to complete full management cycle to assess the status of conservation feature. Adding this step will allow assessment of management effectiveness instead of management performance. Currently there is a gap in data on the status of conservation features in individual MPAs, this however can be partly eliminated through incorporation of Management Effectiveness assessment into Habitat Directive Article 17 reporting.



Annex 3. MPA network contribution to achieving GES: gaps and solutions

Please note that the gaps and solutions presented in this document do not represent a one to one match.

Conceptual shift in the reasoning behind spatial conservation

Gaps:

- The scope of HBD annexes is too narrow. MPAs need to represent legal protection not only to a few threatened habitats/species but need to focus on ensuring thriving biodiversity and resilience.

Solution:

- Switch the overall reasoning behind MPAs from protecting threatened species directly to ensuring biodiversity/resilience in general. Use important (but possibly also common) habitats/biotopes, identified based on the function they serve in the ecosystem (and the link it to ecosystem services) as a backbone of the network and then modify with extra measures for threatened species. When doing this it is important to include the additional overall function of diversity of an area for resilience as a criterion. This would enable the network to be expanded to include/function as:
 - Future climate refugia as MPAs
 - Account for life history stages in designation of protected areas.
 - Including food web aspects, which are missing from current MPA design and function.
 - Genetic diversity, which is not covered by current MPAs (or legislation).
- Pristine areas should be protected (they also entail lower cost as there is no or very little cost for restoration)
- Full protection for representative MPAs (no use areas, which would automatically protect everything), would also ensure that reference areas are available.
- Protect larger areas, where appropriate, but use zoning to allow for broader use.
- There is a need to change the narrative that the sea belongs to no one/those that exploit it. This is the main driver behind the “tragedy of the commons” phenomenon evident in the marine environment. The marine environment provides services necessary for everyone, and thus belongs to everyone. The burden of proof needs to be changed from society needing to present proof that an activity causes harm, to the user having to prove that at given activity does not cause harm.

Legal instruments

Gaps

- Currently little or no legal provisions for the conservation of conservation elements not listed under the HBD.
- Lack of legal support for designating MPAs under MSFD (only legal context for HBD), only HBD species and habitats are protected within the protected area even if it is designated under MSFD.

Solutions

- Clear legal, enforceable, restrictions on what is allowed/not allowed in different types of MPAs is needed.



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- Expanding on current national conservation legislation to include conservation features not included on the HBD annexes, including species/habitat important for the ecosystem but which are not directly threatened.

Design and planning of MPA network

Gaps:

- Planning for the MPA network and its management, including identifying coverage of habitats (and gaps therein), requires improved regional habitat maps.
- Need to identify areas that are important also outside of the MPAs is important (e.g. green infrastructure).
- A need for better understanding of connectivity between MPAs and areas of ecosystem importance/green infrastructure in order to understand its role in achieving GES.
- What information is lacking for getting a proper 30% by 2030 network?

Solutions:

- Use Precautionary Approach when we lack data.
- Zoning and MSP can be used as tool to increase the value of existing MPAs.

Human activities

Gaps:

- Regulation of human activities are not adequately taken into account in the designation of MPAs.
- How to take distant activities e.g. runoff etc. into consideration when planning the management of the MPAs. A prerequisite is the ability to link the source to the effect on the biodiversity feature.
- Identify what pressures are direct for a MPA and which are indirect, and what are the associated activities.
- Enforcement of measures

Solutions:

- identify what the available effective measures are (currently in use/possible to implement).
- establish mandatory AIS inside and around protected areas
- List concrete measure and quantitative conservation objectives for the marine part of the MPAs and make this information available at the regional level and in English.
- Enable managers to manage: ensure that they have legal rights for enforcement, capacity etc. Alternatively establish closer, active, cooperation with other authorities (e.g. coast guard, police).

Management effectiveness

Gaps:

- Lack of baseline information
- Difficult to control activities, e.g. fisheries.
- Active pressures (e.g. tourism, fisheries etc) are poorly managed, while static pressures are better managed.
- How to identify if the measure has a positive effect? How to deal with time lags?



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Solutions:

- Need for MPA specific indicators for state in MPAs (would also guide the baseline monitoring for MPAs):
 - e.g. Large predatory fish-indicator
- “Rule breaker pays”: Direct and concrete consequences (fines, fees, confiscation etc) to breaking a regulation -> the resulting funds to fed directly back into the management of the area in which the action was committed.



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Annex 4. Draft synopsis for the update Baltic Sea Action Plan

The synopses developed at the workshop have been submitted to the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan process and are presented on the site for the workshop, [here](#).