Harbour porpoise policy aspects:

Improved harmonisation between HELCOM and OSPAR regarding indicators for Harbour porpoise

HELCOM BLUES Project Workshop

HELCOM BLUES WS 2.4.1-2021

Co-funded by the
European Union

The BSAP

Vision

A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities.

Goals and objectives of the BSAP

Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication

- Clear water
- Natural level of algal blooms
- Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals
- Natural oxygen levels

Favourable status of Baltic Sea biodiversity

- Natural marine and coastal landscapes
- Thriving and balanced communities of plants and animals
- Viable populations of species

Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances

- Concentrations of hazardous substances close to natural levels
- All fish are safe to eat
- Healthy wildlife
- Radioactivity at the pre-Chernobyl level

Environmentally friendly maritime activities

- Enforcement of international regulations – no illegal discharges
- Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution
- Efficient emergency and response capabilities
- Minimum sewage pollution from ships
- No introductions of alien species from ships
- Minimum air pollution from ships
- Zero discharges from offshore platforms
- Minimum threats from offshore installations

2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration

Biodiversity and resilient ecosystems which underpin ecosystem services, human well-being and prosperity

- 4 (B).WE DECIDE to implement on a regional level the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the 2011- 2020 period of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, taking into account the special characteristics of the Baltic Sea, bearing in mind that the implementation of the Plan in the EU and its Member States is carried out through the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and more specifically DECIDE to:
  - take decisive action to work towards a favourable conservation status of the harbor porpoise based on implementation of the CMS ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan for the harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea, in particular by addressing the pressing problem of by-catch;

The updated Baltic Sea Action Plans 2021

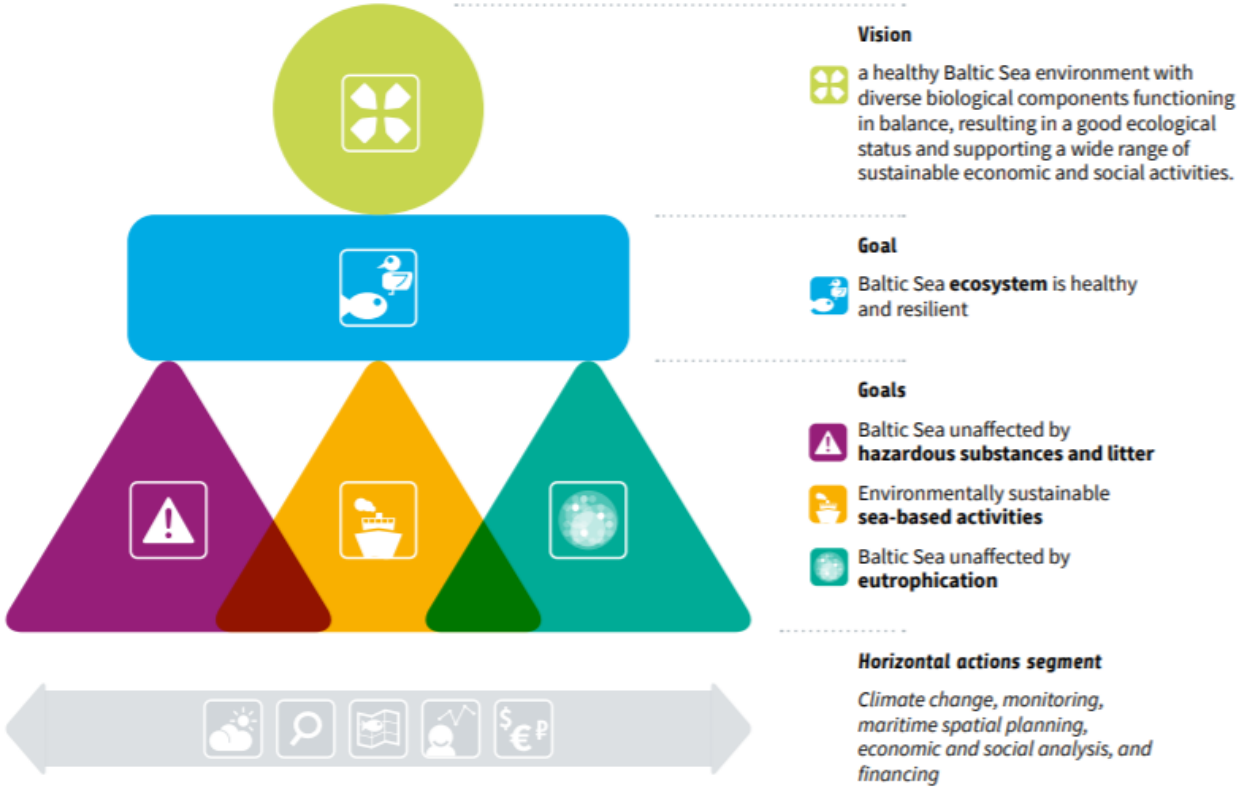

Figure 1. Vision and goals of the Baltic Sea Action Plan to which the HELCOM indicators contribute.

Under discussion in BSAP update process – DRAFT texts, pending conclusion and approval

- By [2022] at the latest, specify knowledge gaps on all threats to the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise population, and by [2023] for the western Baltic population, including bycatch and areas of high bycatch risk, underwater noise, contaminants and prey depletion, identify possible mitigation measures and implement such measures as they become available.
- Knowledge gaps related to areas of high by-catch risk are to be addressed by [2026] and by [2028] at the latest additional areas of high bycatch risk for both Baltic Sea populations are to be determined.
- Invite the competent authorities to immediately, but no later than 2022, implement mitigation measures in the Baltic proper, in order for by-catch of harbour porpoise to be significantly reduced with the aim to reach by-catch rates close to zero.
- Invite the competent authorities to implement operational conservation measures for the Belt Sea population of harbour porpoise by [2024] such as permanent and/or spatial-temporal closures for relevant fishing métiers in risk areas where technical mitigation measures are insufficient to reach conservation goals.
- Cooperate with BALTFISH in order to promote effective mitigation measures to minimize bycatch of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise (Phocoena phocoena), such as Acoustic Deterrent Devices, and to evaluate and adjust measures as needed.
- *Also several measures/actions/supporting actions related to underwater noise and MPAs and other relevant aspects – though not all specifically linked to the harbour porpoise directly.*

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

- Relevant for HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States.
- Primary criteria to be addressed first (HOD 57, document 4-20).

Brief overview of MSFD Descriptor 1

Species groups of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and cephalopods (relating to Descriptor 1)	
Criteria elements	Criteria
Species of birds, **mammals**, reptiles and non-commercially-exploited species of fish and cephalopods, which are **at risk from incidental by-catch** in the region or subregion.	**D1C1 — Primary**: The mortality rate per species from incidental by-catch is below levels which threaten the species, such that its longterm viability is ensured.
Species groups, as listed under Table 1 and if present in the region or subregion. Member States shall establish a set of species representative of each species group, selected according to the criteria laid down under 'specifications for the selection of species and habitats', through regional or subregional cooperation. These shall include the mammals and reptiles listed in Annex II to Directive 92/43/EEC and may include any other species, such as those listed under Union legislation (other Annexes to Directive 92/43/EEC, Directive 2009/147/EC or through Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013) and international agreements such as Regional Sea Conventions.	D1C3 — Primary for commercially exploited fish and cephalopods and **secondary for other species**: The **population demographic characteristics** (e.g. body size or age class structure, sex ratio, fecundity, and survival rates) of the species are indicative of a healthy population which is not adversely affected due to anthropogenic pressures.
	D1C4 — **Primary for species covered by Annexes II, IV or V to Directive 92/43/EEC** and secondary for other species: The **species distributional range** and, where relevant, pattern is in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climatic conditions.
	D1C5 — **Primary for species covered by Annexes II, IV and V to Directive 92/43/EEC** and secondary for other species: The **habitat for the species** has the necessary extent and condition to support the different stages in the life history of the species.

Focus area at this workshop (MSFD D1C2)

Species groups of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and cephalopods (relating to Descriptor 1)	
Criteria elements	Criteria
Species groups, as listed under Table 1 and if present in the region or subregion. Member States shall establish a set of species representative of each species group, selected according to the criteria laid down under 'specifications for the selection of species and habitats', through regional or subregional cooperation. These shall **include the mammals** and reptiles listed in Annex II to Directive 92/43/EEC and may include any other species, such as those listed under Union legislation (other Annexes to Directive 92/43/EEC, Directive 2009/147/EC or through Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013) and international agreements such as Regional Sea Conventions.	**D1C2 — Primary:** The **population abundance of the species is not adversely affected due to anthropogenic pressures**, such that its long-term viability is ensured. Member States shall establish threshold values for each species through regional or subregional cooperation, taking account of natural variation in population size and the mortality rates derived from D1C1, D8C4 and D10C4 and other relevant pressures. For species covered by Directive 92/43/EEC, these values shall be consistent with the Favourable Reference Population values established by the relevant Member States under Directive 92/43/EEC.

Species groups of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and cephalopods (relating to Descriptor 1)

Methodological standards

Scale of assessment: Ecologically-relevant scales for each species group shall be used, as follows:
— for birds, **small toothed cetaceans**, pelagic and demersal shelf fish: **region or subdivisions for Baltic Sea** and Black Sea;

Use of criteria: The **status of each species shall be assessed individually**, on the basis of the criteria selected for use, and these shall be **used to express the extent to which good environmental status has been achieved** for each species group for each area assessed, as follows: (a) **the assessments shall express the value(s) for each criterion used per species and whether these achieve the threshold values set**; (b) the overall status of species covered by Directive 92/43/EEC shall be derived using the method provided under that Directive. The overall status for commercially-exploited species shall be as assessed under Descriptor 3. For other species, the overall status shall be derived using a method agreed at Union level, taking into account regional or subregional specificities; (c) the overall status of the species group, using a method agreed at Union level, taking into account regional or subregional specificities.

Additional specifications

- Specifications and standardised methods for monitoring and assessment relating to theme ‘Species groups of marine birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and cephalopods’ Species composition shall be understood to refer to the lowest taxonomic level appropriate for the assessment.
  - **Species may be assessed at population level**, where appropriate.
  - Wherever possible, the assessments under Directive 92/43/EEC, Directive 2009/147/EC and Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 shall be used for the purposes of this Decision:
    - b) for **mammals,** reptiles and non-commercial fish, the **criteria are equivalent to those used under Directive 92/43/EEC as follows: D1C2 and D1C3 equate to ‘population**’, D1C4 equates to ‘range’ and D1C5 equates to ‘habitat for the species’;
  - **Assessments of the adverse effects from pressures** under criteria D1C1, D2C3, D3C1, D8C2, D8C4 and D10C4, as well as the assessments of pressures under criteria D9C1, D10C3, D11C1 and D11C2, **shall be taken into account in the assessments of species under Descriptor 1**.
  - Units of measurement for the criteria: — **D1C2: abundance (number of individuals or biomass in tonnes (t)) per species.**