



Document title	Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan
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Agenda Item	2 - Matters arising from other HELCOM and VASAB work
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Background

HOD 53-2017 endorsed the proposal for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and agreed to submit it to HELCOM 39-2018 for adoption, taking into account that the sections referring to the HELCOM Brussels Declaration 2018 will be cross-checked and aligned by the Secretariat. HELCOM 39-2018 considered the proposal for the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and adopted the proposal as contained in this document. The meeting also agreed to the establishment of the BSAP Task Force and that its Terms of Reference will be proposed and considered at the next HOD meeting.

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting held on 6 March 2018 adopted the [HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration](#), which includes three major decisions to:

1. Strengthen the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021;
2. Update of the BSAP by 2021;
3. Use the water and ocean related UN Sustainable Development Goals and targets as a framework for updating the BSAP.

The proposal has been cross-checked and aligned with the wording of the Ministerial Declaration.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the attached plan for the BSAP update and make use of the information as needed.

Update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan

In the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) Contracting Parties agreed to monitor and evaluate the status of its implementation by making use of the indicators agreed upon as well as HELCOM thematic assessments, annual HELCOM indicator fact sheets and other information available.

The 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting was tasked to evaluate the effectiveness of the national programmes and to review the progress towards the ecological objectives describing a Baltic Sea in good environmental/ecological status (GES). Based on this review the BSAP was to be adjusted and the set of indicators with associated targets was to be up-dated to ensure their relevance for achieving the objectives.

It was not possible to accomplish this task by 2013 as a suitable set of indicators was not available. Since then HELCOM has achieved considerable progress in establishing core indicators with associated threshold values. 28 core indicators were used to produce the first version of the second holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea, “State of the Baltic Sea” report. The report assesses the progress towards the ecological objectives and provides essential information to be able to reflect on the effectiveness of measures.

The 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting will decide and give the mandate as to the update of the BSAP.

The aim of the update of the BSAP is to adjust actions based on the newest scientific knowledge about the ecosystems so that GES can be reached and the HELCOM’s strategic goals and ecological objectives and relevant marine and water targets of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be met in the Baltic Sea.

The updated BSAP will be adopted by Contracting Parties at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2021.

Guiding principles

The update of the BSAP will be guided by:

- The fundamental principles of the Helsinki Convention and principles of the BSAP;
- The adopted HELCOM vision “A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in a good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities”
- Ocean-related UN Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets, and in particular SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, which will be used as a framework in updating the BSAP.

The updated BSAP will more clearly identify how it serves implementation of general and specific provisions of the Helsinki Convention.

HELCOM strategic goals and ecological objectives, and marine and water targets of SDGs

The four strategic goals of HELCOM, describing the desired state of the marine environment, will remain in the updated BSAP:

- “Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”,
- “Baltic Sea with life undisturbed by hazardous substances”,
- “Maritime activities carried out in an environmentally friendly way”
- “Favourable conservation status of Baltic Sea biodiversity”;

The current HELCOM ecological objectives, describing the good environmental/ecological status we want to achieve for the Baltic Sea, will be reviewed, amended as necessary, and new ecological objectives will be developed for additional issues that also need to be addressed to achieve good status and to ensure SDGs are taken into account. These issues have been identified to be, for example, marine litter, underwater noise and seabed damage and disturbance.

Marine and water targets of SDGs will be incorporated in the updated BSAP, guiding development of actions to reach HELCOM objectives.

The HELCOM core indicators will become part of the updated BSAP.

Accomplishing the existing agreements the basis for the BSAP update

HELCOM and Contracting Parties have pledged to strengthen the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan at the UN Ocean Conference, 5-9 June 2017, New York. The commitment is to continue implementation of the agreed actions that will contribute to the implementation of SDG 14, and for instance, includes:

- speeding up the implementation of the marine litter regional action plan, continuing its battle against eutrophication and planning towards the elaboration of a regional action plan on underwater noise, to fulfil SDG 14.1,
- ensuring close cooperation on any maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea area and management plans for all marine protected areas, to fulfil SDG 14.2 and 14.5,
- supporting sustainable agricultural practices, to contribute to SDG 2.4, and ecosystem-related fishery measures, towards SDG 14.4 and 14.6.

More generally, HELCOM will strive for more resilient marine ecosystems to be better prepared for human-induced climate change challenges. It will also promote further regional development of socio-economic analyses to create tailor-made connecting points between implementation of different SDGs.

The outcome of the High-level Segment of HELCOM 38-2017 on 28 February 2017 provided the basis for Contracting Parties to pledge the commitment to strengthen the BSAP implementation by 2021.

The HELCOM report “Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2018 – three years left to reach good environmental status” show themes where Contracting Parties have come farther in the implementation of the BSAP in the light of results of the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report. Overall, the accomplishment of joint and national actions is highest for the maritime segment.

While renewed efforts to make decisive progress towards the 2021 goals will continue, the accomplishments of the BSAP and the two follow-up Ministerial Declarations, from 2010 and 2013, will be taken as the basis in the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. While working on updating BSAP, Contracting Parties will at least maintain the ambition levels of agreed actions and objectives.

The current actions that do not have measurable and clear targets (and thus so far not assessed with regard to the level of accomplishment) will be developed into more specific actions or set of actions in the updated BSAP.

Actions of the current agreements may jointly be concluded as obsolete or agreed to be superseded by another actions perceived as more effective.

The assessment in [HELCOM Explorer](#) will be updated, and it will be expanded to HELCOM Recommendations to provide a fuller picture of the status of implementation of HELCOM agreements.

Voluntary commitments for the United Nations Conference "Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14" (9 June 2017 in New York) and “Our Ocean conference” (5-6 October, Malta) will be followed-up and reflected in the updated BSAP as appropriate.

New actions

The updated BSAP will include new joint (regional) and national actions, to be decided on the basis of:

- the 2018 Ministerial Declaration,
- the results of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report.

The first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report shows that, although signs of improvement in the state of the Baltic Sea are seen in some cases, the BSAP goals and ecological objectives have not yet been reached.

One additional conclusion is that some measures already put into operation have not been in place long enough to have an effect. For measures such as reduction of nutrient loads, it will take several decades before full effects can be measured in the environment.

The HELCOM report “Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2018 – three years left to reach good environmental status” can be utilized to identify topics that still have received relatively minor attention in HELCOM in terms of measures and management coordination.

As a next step, HELCOM will carry out an analysis of sufficiency of measures to reach HELCOM objectives and targets, to support selection of new actions.

New findings, as may become available within HELCOM and elsewhere, will also be utilized in proposing new actions.

A business as usual scenario, developed in a participatory and interdisciplinary manner, as well as economic analysis could support the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Process and resources

The update of the BSAP will be carried out by a Task Force under the guidance of the Heads of Delegation.

Contracting Parties will provide resources for the work, including for analysis and reporting.

HELCOM working groups and expert groups will be engaged in the process of updating BSAP to provide input and utilize the existing HELCOM expertise.

Stakeholders including HELCOM Observers will be invited to the process, building on the success of engagement of stakeholders in HELCOM work and in implementation of the BSAP in particular. This will be crucial for creating ownership and support for future implementation of the updated BSAP.

Timetable

Preparatory work, including a project plan starts in 2018.

Task Force is put into operation in 2018.

Structure and main components of the updated BSAP in place in 2019.

Development of detailed content in 2019/2020.

HELCOM high-level segment in early 2020.

A full draft of the updated BSAP available last quarter 2020.

Ministerial Meeting adopts the updated BSAP in [mid-]/[end of] 2021.