



Document title	Review of the BSAP structure and HELCOM objectives
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Background

According to strategic plan for the update of the BSAP and the decision by HOD 55-2018, Working Groups have initiated a review of the existing HELCOM ecological and management objectives and the development of new objectives for marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance to the seabed. Concomitantly HOD have reviewed the overarching 'BSAP structure', including its segments and goals, and agreed on a provisional structure to be used as a basis for the update of the BSAP and ongoing work by the Working Groups (para 2.23, Outcome HOD 56-2019).

The review of existing objectives and the development of new ones is taking place through an iterate process where the review has been initiated by one Working Group, while other Groups have had the possibility to comment the proposals of relevance for the mandate of their work. This document includes information on the proposed update of the 'BSAP structure' (section 1) and a summary on the most up to date proposals on objectives by Working Groups with regard to sea-based activities (section 2). Note that the proposals will also be discussed at State and Conservation 11-2019 and Pressure 11-2019 that takes place the week before HELCOM-VASAB MSP 19-2019. The Meeting will be informed on any updates to the objectives that have been proposed by these meetings.

The aim is to finalize an updated set of objectives through autumn meetings of HELCOM Working Groups in 2019 so that HOD 57-2019 can agree upon them.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the provisional agreement to adjust the BSAP structure and the proposal that MSP is primarily linked to a segment on sea-based activities,
- consider the proposed objectives related to sea-based activities, with special attention to objectives with implication for spatial planning (section 2).

1) Background to the adjustment of the Baltic Sea Action Plan

1.1 Use of terms

The following definitions apply to differentiate the structural elements of the BSAP from the development of updated Baltic Sea Action Plan as whole:

- 'BSAP structure' refers to the structural elements, i.e. the thematic segments, goals, and objectives. The structure of the BSAP provides for an outward communication to the wider community on the overall aims and objectives of HELCOM work. It will also govern where different type of agreements will be sorted in the updated plan.
- 'BSAP document' refers to the full text and content of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan. The whole plan, which may take the form of a document as well as electronically, will be a substantial record that also outlines HELCOM higher level aims and agreements on actions to reach good status. A proposal for how the Eutrophication segment could be organized in the updated BSAP is included in [document 2-4 to HOD 56-2019](#).

1.2 Background to the existing objectives

Development of the first set of ecological objectives was based on work initiated in HELCOM in 2003, further developed through the HELCOM EcoQo project, financed by the EU, and culminating in 2006 with the adoption of a HELCOM Vision, Strategic Goals and Ecological Objectives ([HELCOM 27-2006, para 2.1](#), Figure 1). The Vision describes the overall ambition, whereas Strategic Goals describe the major threats¹ to the Baltic Sea as defined at that time, and Ecological Objectives describe central characteristics of a healthy sea in a generalised way. Through the development and implementation of HELCOM actions and agreements, the goals and objectives are to be met. This also requires the establishment of links to the activities, sources, and societal drivers that are contributing to the current state of the environment.

The ecological objectives were developed with the explicit aim to provide a link to environmental monitoring, assessments, research and management. When they were adopted, development of indicators with associated threshold values and targets was already outlined as a next major step for HELCOM. The HELCOM ecological objectives were thus developed as a "seed" for the next step in the process. In hindsight it can be concluded that the achievement of many of HELCOM ecological objectives can to date be assessed by HELCOM core indicators and associated threshold values. For the Maritime segment, representing shipping and offshore installations, management objectives were formulated.

With regard to the formulation of these objectives, the aim was to communicate HELCOM's ambition with a wider stakeholder community ranging from scientists and politicians to the general public. The HELCOM ecological objectives thus reflect the aspired state of the environment in broad terms, while it is the HELCOM core indicators and pressure targets that describes good environmental status.

In the current BSAP structure the ecological objectives are described separately under the four strategic goals. The interlinkages between the goals were outlined when the first system was adopted, clarifying that there are many horizontal links between different ecological objectives.

1.3 Adjustment to the BSAP structure

As part of the BSAP update process, HOD 55-2018 requested HELCOM Working Groups to initiate the development of ecological objectives for the topics marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance of the seabed and to review existing HELCOM objectives based on guidance given by the GEAR Group.

¹ For biodiversity described as loss of biodiversity caused by eutrophication, hazardous substances and maritime activities.

Management objectives, which currently only exists for the BSAP segment on maritime activities, should be developed for all segments of the updated BSAP. HOD 56-2019 furthermore agreed to use ecological objectives, management objectives and actions to organize the segments of the updated BSAP document (Outcome, para 2.23). The association between the three components is illustrated in Figure 1.

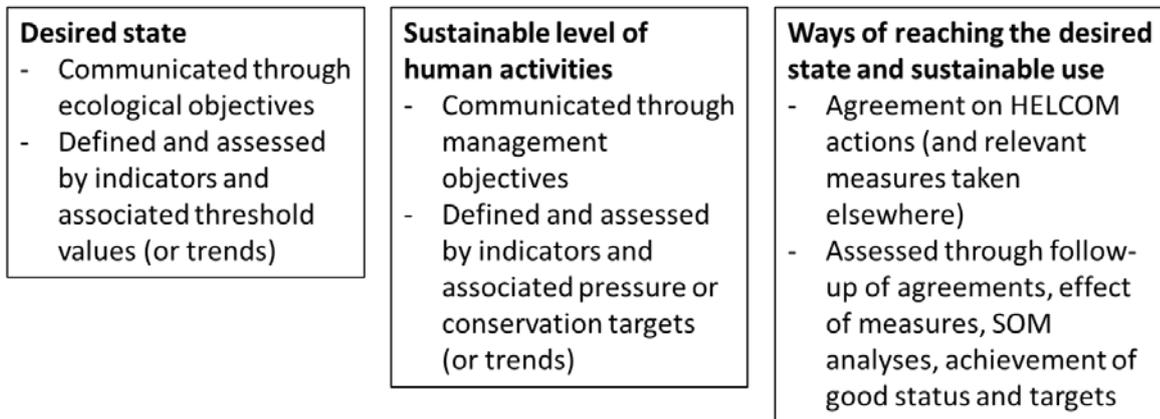


Figure 1. Link and purpose of HELCOM ecological objectives, management objectives and actions.

Once the revised and updated objectives have been agreed upon the continued development of the updated BSAP will be organized according to this framework.

HOD 56-2019 also supported an adjustment to the BSAP structure to better reflect the topics that are currently addressed in HELCOM. The structure follows closely the existing BSAP, maintaining four segments, with the following adjustments (Figure 2):

- to address litter primarily under the segment on hazardous substances and to consider changing the segment and associated goal to 'Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and litter'.
- to include under the maritime segment a broader set of sea-based activities and consider changing the name of the segment and associated strategic goal to 'Environmentally friendly sea-based activities'. The new topics underwater noise and loss and disturbance of the seabed are primarily assigned to this segment. Since the segment on 'Sea-based activities' is proposed to address many activities that are considered in Maritime Spatial Planning, MSP would mainly be linked to this segment.
- the segments and goals on Eutrophication and Biodiversity remain as present while the associated activities and actions may be adjusted as relevant.
- the segments on Eutrophication and Hazardous substances and litter will, as in the current BSAP, primarily focus on pressures from land-based activities.

Maritime 19-2019 furthermore proposed to change the goal of the sea-based segment by exchanging the word 'friendly' with 'sustainable'. This proposal will be presented for consideration by HOD 57-2019.

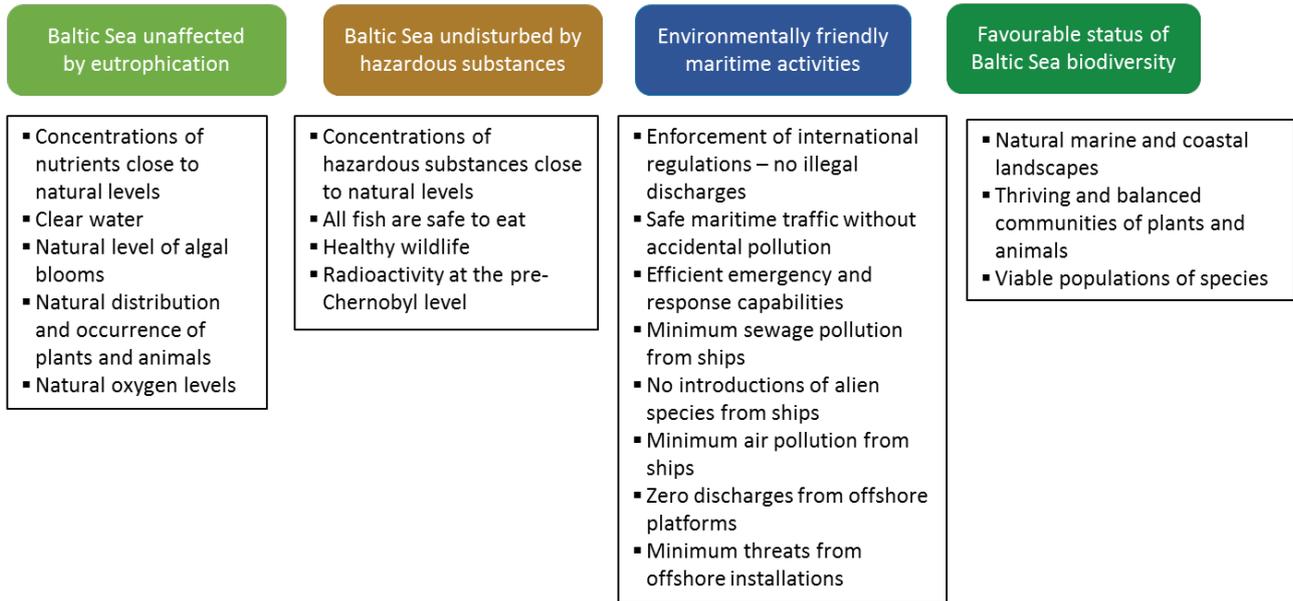
A tentative list of pressures and activities to be addressed under the segment sea-based activities of the 'BSAP document' is outlined in Annex 1. The final list will depend on the outcome of the activity-pressure mapping that is carried out under the activity to analyse sufficiency of measures (SOM) and ultimately on the agreed actions to be included in the updated BSAP document.

It should be noted that the 'BSAP structure' is not directly linked to the HELCOM Working Group structure and that several Working Groups will be involved in the future implementation of actions under each segment in the updated BSAP.

VISION (HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will be maintained):

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

SEGMENTS, GOALS and OBJECTIVES (original):



SEGMENT and GOALS (as HOD 56-2019):

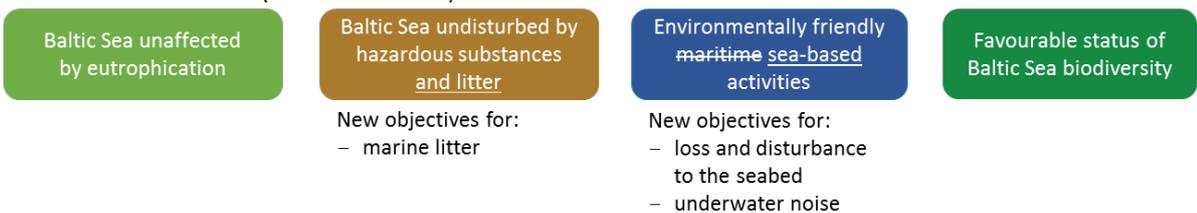


Figure 2. The upper part of the figure shows the current HELCOM system with a vision, strategic goals, ecological objectives (eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity) or management objectives (maritime activities). All existing objectives are to be reviewed by HELCOM Working Groups and new objectives are to be developed for marine litter, loss and disturbance to the seabed, and underwater noise. The lower part of the figure shows adjustments to the overarching goals as of HOD 56-2019.

1.4 Process for review of existing objectives and development of new objectives

The review of existing objectives and development of new objectives is carried out through an iterative process where one Working Group has initiated the review, while other Groups will have the possibility to comment the proposals of relevance for the mandate of their work. The review was initiated at spring meetings 2019. The aim is to present proposals for endorsement by HOD in December 2019. So far the following Groups have initiated the task and considered objectives related to sea-based activities:

Pressure 10-2019:

- proposals on new ecological and management of objectives for underwater noise and loss and disturbance to the seabed

State & Conservation 10-2019:

- further elaboration of the initial ideas from Pressure 10-2019 with regard to underwater noise and loss and disturbance to the seabed
- the co-chairs of State & Conservation have further elaborated on the ecological and management objectives related to loss and disturbance to the seabed intersessionally

Fish 10-2019:

- proposal on ecological and management objectives related to loss and disturbance to the seabed from fisheries

Response 26-2019:

- review of the management objective under the existing Maritime segment “Efficient emergency and response capabilities”; the Meeting proposed that the objective should remain as is in the updated BSAP

Maritime 19-2019:

- review of management objectives under the existing segment on maritime activities
- further elaboration on initial ideas on management objectives for underwater noise, loss and disturbance to the seabed

The outcome of the discussions at these meetings is presented in Working Papers ([Pressure 10-2019, DS WP.1](#), [State&Conservation 10-2019, 8J, WP.1 – Attachment 1](#)) or as part of the main outcome of the meetings ([Outcome Fish 10-2019 para 3.22](#), [Response 26-2019 para 3.10](#), [Maritime 19-2019](#)). Since the process is iterative the proposals have evolved over time. Section 2 includes the latest iterations and summary of the revisions that have taken place with regard to objectives related to seabed activities. Annex 2 lists the most current proposals of objectives across the four segments.

1.5 Guidance given for the review and revision of HELCOM objectives

The guidance given for the review and revision of HELCOM objectives is based on the outcome of GEAR 19-2018, GEAR 20-2019, and further elaborations by the Chairs of Pressure, State and Conservation and the Secretariat.

General guidance

The objectives should be:

- linked to HELCOM assessments i.e. achievement should be possible to follow-up through HELCOM assessments,
- easy to communicate to the wider community,
- not too many. Recall that the BSAP structure is meant to reflect overall aim and objectives of HELCOM work to the wider community, but not to list every issue dealt with.
- with regard to the review of existing objectives the following should also be considered:
 - o are objectives missing with respect to new developments in HELCOM since the current BSAP was adopted?
 - o are the objectives up to date (e.g. are the terms used up to date)?
- the terminology of objectives between segments should be harmonized.

Ecological objectives

- should reflect the desired state of the environment and be of aspirational character,
- should be possible to follow-up by use of indicators and associated threshold values,
- with regard to new topics (marine litter, underwater noise, loss and disturbance to seabed) the ecological objectives should focus on the state elements of these topics or on their impacts on the environment e.g. on the concentration, amounts or extent of litter/noise/disturbance to seabeds, or properties of the ecosystem that should be maintained or not harmed.

Management objectives

- management objectives describe the desired effect of or aspirational targets of management measures, (see e.g. management objectives for existing segment on maritime activities)

- follow-up of management objectives should in principle be done using indicators and associated pressure targets or in the case of biodiversity by targets for conservation and protection.

2) Proposed objectives for sea-based activities

The segment on sea-based activities will be focused on management objectives while also including ecological objectives for loss and disturbance to the seabed, underwater noise, and tentatively aquaculture (see proposal in section 2.4). For other pressures stemming from sea-based activities (eutrophication, hazardous substances, litter, disturbance to species), cross-reference will be made to objectives under other segments.

2.1 Loss and disturbance to seabed habitats

Ecological objectives

Based on proposals by Pressure 10-2019 and Fish 10-2019 and further intersessional elaboration by State and co-chairs, the following ecological objectives are proposed with regard to loss and disturbance to the seabed:

- **Healthy seabed habitats** OR
- **Maintaining natural seabed conditions** OR
- **Undisturbed seabed from human activities** OR
- **Size and distribution of habitats are within limits which secure long term variability for associated communities and ecosystem services**

Management objectives

Based on proposal by Pressure 10-2019 and Fish 10-2019 and further intersessional elaboration by State and Conservation co-chairs, the following management objectives are proposed to loss and disturbance to the seabed are:

- **Sustainable practices of activities that causing loss and disturbance to the seabed,** [covering a large variety of activities], OR the following more specific objectives,
- **Sustainable fishery practices,** AND,
- **Sustainable practices for extraction of oil, gas and minerals,** AND,
- **Ecosystem-based planning of marine infrastructure,** AND,
- **Best practices for dredging and of depositing of dredged material**

Ecological objectives

Pressure 10-2019 proposed to consider the following objectives: 'Healthy seabed habitats' OR 'Maintaining natural seabed conditions'. It was however noted by the Meeting that it is necessary to distinguish ecological objectives for the status of benthic habitats (as will be developed under the biodiversity segment) from an ecological objective related specifically to loss and disturbance to the seabed.

Fish 10-2019 proposed to consider 'Undisturbed seabed from human activities' as an alternative objective to those proposed by Pressure but a preferred option was to develop an objective related to maintaining resilience and functions of seabed, along the lines of Descriptor 6 of the MSFD, i.e. "Sea-floor integrity is at a level that ensures that the structure and functions of the ecosystems are safeguarded and benthic ecosystems". **Based on the latter guidance, the co-chairs of State and Conservation have intersessionally prepared the last alternative on the list as an alternative proposal for an ecological objective.**

Management objectives

The proposals mainly originate from Pressure 10-2019. It can be noted that some additional objectives were proposed but are not included in the summary box since they were formulated as actions rather than objectives. For full outcome of discussion see [Pressure 10-2019, DS WP.1.](#)

Fish 10-2019 proposed to amend one of the objectives by Pressure so that it reads ‘Sustainable fishery practices’ but also discussed the possibility to include more specific objectives e.g. “Gear with less impact on the seabed”, and “Gear avoiding by-catch of marine mammals, seabirds and protected fish species”.

Maritime 19-2019 proposed to exclude the proposal by Pressure 10-2019 on an objective to ‘Minimise areas affected by (anthropogenically induced) hypoxia’ since it is only partly related to sea-based activities; the main input of nutrients originates from land-based activities.

The management objective is proposed to either be based on one overarching objective or to formulate a more comprehensive set objectives related to activities that are using or having an impact on the seabed. The co-chairs of State and Conservation have worked further with the proposed management objectives with the aim that they should reflect the activities that have the highest impacts on Baltic Sea seabeds as indicated by the State of the Baltic Sea report and the HELCOM BSPI/BSII, namely; fishery practices (bottom contact fishing gear), extraction of seabed resources, installations and infrastructure (causing loss to the seabed) and dredging activities. **Note that one of the management objectives refers to ecosystem based planning of marine infrastructure.**

2.2 Underwater noise

Ecological objectives

Based on Pressure 10-2019 and amended by State&Conservation 10-2019 the following alternatives for ecological objectives have been proposed:

- 1) **No harm to wildlife from anthropogenic noise, OR**
- 2) **Introduction of sound does not harm wildlife**

Management objectives

At present two guidelines exist:

- 1) that two separate objectives should be developed; one for impulsive noise and one for continuous noise (State&Conservation 10-2019)
- 2) that the objectives should focus on underwater noise only (GEAR 10-2019)

Further input is expected from EN Noise.

Ecological objectives

The work has focused on the development of new ecological objectives.

Management objectives

Pressure 10-2019 proposed a set of management objectives for underwater noise but they have not been further elaborated, mainly because they were formulated as actions rather than objectives. For full outcome of discussion see [Pressure 10-2019, DS WP.1.](#) Pressure 10-2019 also discussed the following in general: “For underwater noise some differing views were expressed. Since noise will always exist in the environment one view was that such objectives could focus on designating places with no noise. The use of the word “quiet/quieter” was also supported since it speaks to the wider community”.

Maritime 19-2019 supported that two separate objectives should be developed for continuous and impulsive noise.

2.3 Maritime activities

Based on Maritime 19-2019, the goal of the segment was proposed to be revised to read: Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities

Management objectives

Proposed management objectives related to maritime activities, based on the outcome of Maritime 19-2019, are.

- **Enforcement of international regulations – no illegal discharges**
- **Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution**
- **Effective emergency and response capabilities**
- **Minimize the contribution to eutrophication and operational pollution from ships**
- **No introductions of non-indigenous species from ships**
- **Minimum harmful air emissions from ships**
- **Zero discharges from offshore platforms**
- **[Minimum threats from offshore installations]**

Management objectives

Maritime 19-2019 discussed the existing management objectives for the current maritime segment. These objectives will be associated to the revised goal related to sea-based activities, and thus, they will be presented together with the proposed ecological and management objectives of underwater noise and loss and disturbance to the seabed. The Meeting agreed on the following revisions as already reflected in the summary box:

- replace the term alien species with non-indigenous species.
- replace the term air pollution with harmful air emissions
- revise 'Efficient emergency and response capabilities' to be 'Effective emergency and...' and
- revise the objective 'Minimum sewage pollution from ships' so that it reads 'Minimize contribution to eutrophication and operational pollution from ships'

The Meeting discussed the management objective on threats from offshore installations and noted that it relates e.g. to installations such as underwater cables, pipelines and offshore wind farms put increasing pressure on the Baltic Sea ecosystem. The Meeting further noted the relevance of maritime spatial planning in this respect and also that objectives related to loss and disturbance of the seabed may reflect this particular angle of offshore installations. **Thus, it could be considered if this objective is covered by the proposal for loss and disturbance to the seabed that reads: 'Ecosystem-based planning of marine infrastructure'.**

The Meeting furthermore proposed to replace the word 'friendly' with 'sustainable' in the goal of the segment on sea-based activities.

2.4. Non-indigenous species

There are no proposals on ecological objectives for non-indigenous species at this time. **The Secretariat proposes that no such objectives should be developed since the presence of non-indigenous species is not possible to formulate in terms of desired state.**

The current Baltic Sea Action Plan includes one management objective that with the proposed revision by Maritime 19-2019 reads: 'No introduction of non-indigenous species from ships'. **It is proposed by the Secretariat to formulate a similar objective related to aquaculture e.g. 'No introduction on non-indigenous species from aquaculture'.**

Annex 1. Proposed issues to be addressed under the updated BSAP segment on sea-based activities, as of HOD 56-2019

Segment: Sea-based activities, including Maritime

Goal addressed:

- Environmentally friendly sea-based activities

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching objectives for sea-based activities a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Favourable conservation status of biodiversity'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter.

Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients
- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of marine litter
- Loss and disturbance to the seabed
- Disturbance of species
- Extraction and mortality species (e.g. extraction of target species, incidental catches)
- Introduction of non-indigenous species
- Introduction of underwater noise

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Shipping (e.g. transport and transport infrastructure)
- Production and transport of energy (e.g. operational wind farms, transmission cables)
- Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
- Extraction of living resources (e.g. fishing, hunting, marine plant extraction)
- Extraction of non-living resources (e.g. mineral extraction, oil and gas extraction)
- Restructuring of coastline and seabed morphology (e.g. dredging)
- Aquaculture, marine (including infrastructure)

Annex 2. Current proposals aligned by ecological objectives and management objectives.

Goals	Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication	Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and litter	Environmentally sustainable ² sea-based activities	Status of biodiversity which ensures resilience and ecological integrity ³
Ecological objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels - [Clear water⁴] - Natural level of algal blooms - Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals - Natural oxygen levels 	<p>Hazardous substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concentrations of hazardous substances close to natural levels - All seafood safe to eat - Healthy wildlife and food webs - Radioactivity at negligible risk level to humans and environment <p>Litter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wild-life safeguarded from marine litter, OR - No harm to wildlife from marine litter 	<p>Loss and disturbance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthy seabed habitats OR - Maintaining natural seabed conditions OR - Undisturbed seabed from human activities OR - Size and distribution of habitats are within limits which secure long term variability for associated communities and ecosystem services <p>Noise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No harm to wildlife from anthropogenic noise, OR - Introduction of sound does not harm wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viable populations of all species - Natural distribution, occurrence and quality of habitats and associated communities - Functional and resilient food webs
Management/conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimize input of nutrients from human activities OR, - Minimize input of nutrients from agriculture and... 	<p>Hazardous substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replacement of hazardous substance by more environmental friendly alternatives, AND - Minimize input of hazardous substances OR - Minimize input of hazardous substances from industry, households, agriculture ...- <p>Litter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimize input of litter from ... , - Products are designed, produced, used and reused, recycled and disposed to minimize marine litter, - Amounts of litter are significantly reduced on beaches and in the sea 	<p>Loss and disturbance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable practices of activities that causing loss and disturbance to the seabed, OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Sustainable fishery practices, AND o Sustainable practices for extraction of oil, gas and minerals, AND o Ecosystem-based planning of marine infrastructure, AND o Best practices for dredging and of depositing of dredged material <p>Noise:</p> <p>No proposals</p> <p>Maritime activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement of international regulations – no illegal discharges - Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution - Effective emergency and response capabilities - Minimize the contribution to eutrophication and operational pollution from ships - No introductions of non-indigenous species from ships- - Minimum harmful air emissions from ships - Zero discharges from offshore platforms - [Minimum threats from offshore installations]⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An effectively managed, ecological coherent and representative network of marine protected areas - Ecosystem-based planning of ecologically important areas outside MPAs - Minimized disturbance of species by human activities, including access to migration routes - Human induced mortality of species at sustainable level - Effective and regional coordinated conservation plans and measures for threatened species and habitats - The food web is balanced in species composition and total abundance - The food web is assessed holistically as an interconnected system"

² proposed revision by Maritime 10-2019 (the original segment uses the term 'friendly' instead of 'sustainable')

³ new proposal to be discussed by State and Conservation 11-2019 (the original segment read "Favourable status of Baltic biodiversity

⁴ under discussion

⁵ see reflection by Maritime 19-2019, section 2.3.3