



Document title	Proposal for future HELCOM actions
Code	4-26
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	4 - Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups
Submission date	23.11.2015
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

Background

This document contains proposals for 14 future actions within HELCOM which have been proposed by the individual Contracting Parties, HELCOM working groups, or the IG PoM Workshop (28 October 2015, Warsaw) to feed into the process of regional coordination of programmes of measures under GEAR during 2015.

The descriptions of the actions reflect the latest status as consulted among the Gear Contacts and included in Annex 3 of the draft Joint documentation of regional coordination of programmes of measures (document 4-25) (please note the fine-tuned action 5 on risk assessment for ships). However, comments are still expected from one Contracting Party, Germany. Furthermore, Denmark has not yet expressed their view on an alternative wording on action 2 on “Investigation into the role of stored nutrients in the Baltic and potential management measures” and placed a study reservation on the proposed action 9 on “Activities to support conservation of Baltic Sea species and biotopes/habitats categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List”.

Overview of consultations with the working groups is as follows:

- State&Conservation WG has been involved in developing action 4 and actions 6-9; the descriptions of the actions have been finalized based on the outcome of the IG PoM workshop and feedback by Gear contacts;
- Pressure WG has been involved in developing action 3;
- Response WG has been involved in developing action 5, still to be considered by MARITIME 15-2015;
- Fish 3-2015 will consider actions 11 and 12;
- HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG has not yet been consulted (action 7).

Coordinated implementation of Marine Litter Regional Action Plan have not been included in this document, as it is already agreed and is an ongoing activity.

Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap has not been included in this document, as it is covered by a separate document for this meeting (document 4-21).

Some of the proposed actions are already reflected in the existing work plans of the groups or covered by ongoing/planned projects. The description of each action in the following pages has been complemented with information on the level of the existing agreement in HELCOM as well as scope for cooperation with OSPAR/RSCs.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed actions one by one.

Based on decisions on the actions by the Meeting, Annex 3 of draft Joint documentation of regional coordination of programmes of measures can be updated accordingly.

Further actions to be considered

ACTION 1: Exchange of information and development of good practices in the use of blue catch crops and other biomass removal related sea-based measures for diminishing nutrient burden of the Baltic Sea

Short title: "Blue catch crops / mussel farming" (cf. 4.1.1. Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

Some Contracting Parties have included the promotion of the use of blue catch crops (e.g. farming of mussels, algae and ascidia, collection of algae and phytoplankton) in their PoMs. Use of blue catch crops is a fairly new approach to remove nutrients from the sea and can also be associated with aquaculture as a compensation measure.

This initiative aims at setting up an activity for exchange of knowledge on best practices and demonstration projects on the use of blue catch crops overall as compensation measures. The initiative could include consideration of other sea-based biomass removal activities, e.g. removal of roach or other fish. The activity could also lead to development of joint guidance on the issue.

The initiative contributes to the reaching of good environmental status in regard eutrophication.

Possible obstacles have been recognized such as lack of participation by CPs to such an activity e.g. by those who do not have plans for or interest in the topic. Technical obstacles include risks associated with intensive mussel farming, heavy metal loads in farmed algae or mussels, undeveloped market for compensatory products.

Proposed timetable: 2018-2021 or possibly earlier

Possible steps for implementation: HELCOM initiates an activity under PRESSURE group to accomplish the objectives set out in the description.

ALREADY AGREED: NOT YET

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide as appropriate.

ACTION 2: Assess the role of [internal nutrient reserves] [accumulated nutrients] [stored nutrients] in the Baltic and potential management measures

Short title: Management of [internal load / endogenous nutrient reserves] [accumulated nutrient loads / stored nutrients] (cf. 4.1.2., Annex 3, document 4-25)

An alternative description below is proposed by Sweden. Denmark has not yet expressed their view on the alternative wording.

Background information:

Fertilization of surface waters by input from nutrient storage in deeper water layers and sediments accentuates and prolongs eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. However, input is not continuous, it varies between sub-basins, and as such it is not comparable to external load.

Alternative: Transport of nutrients to surface layers from both deep water and sediments accentuates and prolongs eutrophication in coastal waters and in the central Baltic Sea. The scale and dynamics of the problem varies from small coastal basins suffering from hypoxia/anoxia to the main deeps of the Baltic Proper. Remedial measures are a potential complement to the external load reductions. It is timely to examine and evaluate these precautionary measures, because external loads as well as inputs of stored nutrients to the productive layer of the Baltic Sea are likely to further exacerbate due to climate change.

Proposed timetable: 2016-2019

Possible steps for implementation:

In this action the first step would include formulation of questions that would need to be answered in relation to the nature and dynamics of internal nutrient storage and loading. Second step ought to be to promote action, including mapping of stored nutrients and the assessment of potential impacts, even research and modelling as far as necessary, to reply to the posed questions and provide information that can be utilized for communication about internal nutrient storage with the general public and policy makers.

Another track of the action is an investigation and compilation of information regarding existing and potential techniques to combat internal load and experiences from already completed pilot projects.

As the last step, possibly an investigation into legal and financial as well as monitoring frameworks that would need to be taken into account for pilots/projects to be carried out.

Alternative: The first step consists of a scientific workshop on the state of art regarding the nutrient dynamics and management in sediments with the aim of formulating questions that need to be answered and understood about the nature of stored nutrients, dynamics of their transport to the productive layer as well as potential measures to regulate these storages, including requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment.

The second step is mapping significant nutrient stores/stocks and appropriate modelling to answer questions identified in the previous step, as well as to inform the general public and policy makers.

The third step is to identify different type of experimental sites and methods for prototype scale tests, together with the design of appropriate standardized monitoring strategies and an assessment of the respective environmental, legal, technical and economic challenges that need to be met. Description of these challenges should form a basis for guidance documents to be used by environmental authorities when evaluating future applications to use in situ management methods.

After prototype scale tests, the experimental results need to be evaluated against the benchmarks identified in the third step to inform the further development of promising techniques. Both successful and failed remedial approaches will inform the technical guidance in the 'cookbook -toolbox'.

ALREADY AGREED: PARTLY

The issue was discussed when developing ToR for Pressure WG. The ToR includes the following: “Priority is given to reducing inputs. Being aware of the need to speed up the steps towards the recovery of the Baltic Sea, innovative measures may be needed as complementary action.”

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide as appropriate.

ACTION 3: Intensifying HELCOM work to reduce airborne transboundary nitrogen input from outside of HELCOM area, in particular the Gothenburg Protocol (cf. 4.1.3., Annex 3, document 4-25)**Background information:**

Airborne nitrogen deposition originating from outside HELCOM area is a significant source of nitrogen input to the sea. This source is managed under the Convention on Long-Range of Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) and more specifically its Gothenburg Protocol. Prompted by BSAP, HELCOM has previously informed bodies implementing the Protocol of eutrophication requesting action. This has not resulted in desirable action.

In this initiative HELCOM will engage firstly in resolving the most effective ways of influencing the work under the Protocol. Most likely that will involve both national contacts as well as the formal bodies responsible for the Convention. In the second step appropriate action will be taken, using HELCOM material, such as eutrophication indicators, PLC- and LOAD input related assessments and indicators, as well as the MAI/CART related follow-up information as the basis.

There is also a linkage to the NEC Directive in this work for those CPs that are also EU Member States.

The initiative has substantial potential to contribute to the reduction of input of nitrogen to the Baltic Sea and to improve eutrophication status.

Proposed timetable: 2016-2021

Possible steps for implementation:

As a starting point, GEAR supported by PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION could design the work in further detail and identify which bodies in HELCOM should assist in carrying out the work.

ALREADY AGREED: YES

Task 3 in the ToR of the Pressure WG ("Cooperate to address nutrient emissions and inputs from non-Contracting Parties to meet the expected reductions according to the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme, e.g. in relation to the Gothenburg Protocol under the UN ECE CLRTAP as well as EU NECD, the work of river basin management commissions/bodies;")

The Meeting is invited to note that this is already agreed action and consider the proposal that as a starting point, GEAR supported by PRESSURE and STATE&CONSERVATION could design the work in further detail and identify which bodies in HELCOM should assist in carrying out the work.

ACTION 4: Micropollutants in effluents from wastewater treatment plants (cf. 4.2.1. Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

Micropollutants despite low (ng/L to µg/L) concentrations in environmental samples, due to their environmentally hazardous properties including for example high persistence, high toxicity to aquatic organisms, or endocrine disrupting properties, may pose risk to the environment. Depending on the level of treatment, WWTPs' effluents can be a significant pathway of micropollutants to the environment, in particular for those that originate from household products and -articles, or personal use. As knowledge of the environmental situation with regard to those pollutants can be improved, survey based on existing national data, screening studies and monitoring programs should be considered as a first step. The other activity should concentrate on knowledge on wastewater from treatment plants as sources of micropollutants in the environment and evaluation of existing and novel WWT techniques by compiling existing information on e.g. feasibility, costs, and good practice.

The activities are aimed on identification of micropollutants problem scale facilitating the analysis of the need for future measures in the BSR countries as well as indicate possible and feasible measures.

Action could be carried out in a possible coordination with OSPAR.

Proposed timetable: Start during 2016, until 2017

Possible steps for implementation:

- *Step 1: Compilation and assessment of available information and data of micropollutants of concern for Contracting Parties in the Baltic Sea – during 2016 (PRESSURE)*
- *Step 2: Compile information from CPs of treatment techniques and experiences– during 2016/7*
- *Step 3: Summary report on advanced treatment techniques, including consideration of feasibility, costs, good practice and management options – during 2017*

ALREADY AGREED: NOT YET

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: indicated, however not specified yet.

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide as appropriate.

ACTION 5: Regional risk assessment tool for ships (please note that this is the further developed text (by the Secretariat) based on cf. 4.3.1., Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

In the recent past (2012), HELCOM BRISK and BRISK-RU projects delivered an assessment of risks for shipping accidents and resulting spills of oil and hazardous substances as well as proposed improvements in the response capacities and safety of navigation for consideration by the Contracting Parties. No Baltic Sea risk assessments have been carried out since these projects.

A regional risk assessment tool for ships is needed to enable more frequent update on the risks for shipping accidents and spills from the Baltic Sea perspective to cater for constantly changing ship traffic patterns.

In order to enable continuous development by the wider Baltic response community (including academia) the tool should be flexible, based on open source coding, and be run frequently (annually/biannually) with less resources than is typically done when using commercial applications.

The main function would be to detect changes in shipping risks and point to the hot spot areas as a basis for:

- *optimizing the preparedness and response capacities on regional and sub-regional levels (according to the Helsinki Convention and HELCOM Response Manual);*
- *detailed national/sub-regional/regional investigations and efforts to improve safety of navigation.*

Such a tool should have application potential worldwide and for this reason this development could be undertaken together with one of the other regional seas. It could well be a further development of existing tools such as the IALA IWRAP and/or other approaches to risk assessment such as those utilized by FSA. The Baltic Sea could be a pilot area for a test run of the tool.

Proposed timetable: Preparations for the activity could be started 2015/2016. Implementation could start in 2017 and end by 2019.

Possible steps for implementation:

Specification of the tool would be developed based on the needs of the Contracting Parties as well as availability of the data (e.g. HELCOM AIS). Existing suitable risk assessment models and tools should be mapped, including in other regional seas.

ALREADY AGREED: YES on a working level

Development of a new regional risk assessment for ships is the identified need (Roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach).

HELCOM RESPONSE 20-2015 (para 13.5) welcomed the idea to start preparations for a joint project application by the Regional Seas Secretariats and key partners on a joint open-access risk assessment tool to the [EU DG ECHO] call for prevention and preparedness next year [Spring 2016].

Input by MARITIME 15-2015 (23-25 November 2015) on the action will be provided to the meeting.

Scope for coordination with other RSCs in short-term: yes

Taking into account the outcome of MARITIME 15-2015 in this regard, the Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide on the action, including a proposal to develop a HELCOM project proposal for EU DG ECHO call in spring 2016.

ACTION 6: Coordination of management measures of pressures and impacts on MPAs, in particular for adjacent transnational MPAs (cf. 4.4.1, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 (para m) recommends that HELCOM MPA related guidelines and guiding documents should be updated as necessary in order to keep them in line with new knowledge and compatible with other international criteria.

Coordinated management guidelines for the same pressures in the same area gives adjacent transnational MPAs better and more comprehensive protection of species the marine nature values in these areas.

When management plans in adjacent transnational MPAs are well coordinated the pressures can be dealt in a cost-effective way in the whole area. The action will contribute to achievement of HELCOM Recommendation 35-1.

Proposed timetable:

Provide a first insight to coordination of management of measures in adjacent transnational MPAs by 2016.

If the action is expanded to include a review and revision of HELCOM guidelines for management plans in general (point 9, step 3), the action is estimated to take several years and will need implementation through a project.

Possible steps for implementation:

- 1) *identify adjacent transnational MPAs using HELCOM MPA database and invite Contracting Parties to inform on any contacts between MPA managers.*
- 2) *make an inventory of the steps and management measures that Contracting Parties have already taken in MPAs, e.g. concerning fisheries and shipping.*
- 3) *investigate if existing management guidelines relevant for the Baltic Sea provide sufficient guidance to address pressure and impacts, including HELCOM guidelines and those related to the Habitats and Birds Directive, and as need may arise identify where HELCOM can provide complementary guidance, in particular for management of transnational MPAs.*

The activity should be carried out linked to the development of conservation plans for e.g. HELCOM Red listed species, also considering the adequate protection of species in adjacent MPAs.

The information in the HELCOM MPA database should be up to date regarding the MPA management plans, including for transnationally located MPAs. Network for managers responsible for these MPAs should be established.

ALREADY AGREED: IMPLICITLY

HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 recommends that HELCOM MPA related guidelines and guiding documents should be updated as necessary in order to keep them in line with new knowledge and compatible with other international criteria (para m).

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide as appropriate.

ACTION 7: How to consider MPAs in Maritime Spatial Planning and vice versa? (cf. 4.4.2, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

The Ecosystem approach provides guiding principles for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). MSP is to consider any restrictions and regulations to MPAs provided through MPA management plans. Some activities are however allowed within MPAs, while conservation objectives may be affected by activities causing pressure outside the MPAs. Thus, MPA/MSP interaction is not delimited by the MPA borders and there is a need to consider activities both inside and outside MPAs in the MSP context and vice versa.

MPAs will be properly taken into account in MSPs and vice versa contributing to the application of HELCOM-VASAB Regional broad scale regional MSP principles.

Proposed timetable: *The action could start in 2016. Tentatively development of regional guidelines could take up to 3 years.*

Possible steps for implementation:

- 1) *Contracting Parties in HELCOM VASAB MSP WG could be invited to inform on how MPAs have been considered so far in national MSP plans as well as any background information already compiled by the group with a view to sharing information with State and Conservation.*
- 2) *set up a workshop or back-to-back meeting with State and Conservation and HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group to discuss how the action can be jointly taken forward.*

The workshop could explore options for how to acknowledge MPAs in MSP and vice versa (possible options are protocol/guidance, amended workplans, ad hoc meetings etc.

In the longer-term some form of joint regional guidelines could tentatively be developed.

ALREADY AGREED: NOT YET

The action is related to:

- recommendation I) in HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 “include HELCOM MPAs as areas of particular ecological significance in coastal and maritime spatial planning processes and incorporate their management provisions in spatial plans and Integrated Marine and Coastal Management Strategies, respectively“
- HELCOM-VASAB Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea area.

This proposal stems from the State and Conservation WG; HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group has not yet been consulted.

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: yes, OSPAR could be invited to join

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and possible implementation steps, support the action in general taking into account that the next meeting of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (tentatively on 25-26 February 2016, Warsaw) can consider the action.

ACTION 8: Develop joint tools/approach for assessing effectiveness of spatial protection measures for individual sites as well as network level (cf. 4.4.3, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information: HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 calls for assessing “the effectiveness of the management plans or measures of HELCOM MPAs by conducting monitoring, and where feasible scientific research programmes, which are directly connected to the conservation interests of HELCOM MPAs, including the placement of monitoring stations inside the MPAs” (para k).

Spatial coverage is the whole Baltic Sea, and possibly for use in other marine regions as well.

Proposed timetable: The action could start in 2016 but the start will depend on resources. It can be noted that HELCOM is partner to a 2015 Life+ application where development of an approach to assess management effectiveness of MPAs is included.

The action will contribute with information on the effectiveness of MPAs and MPA networks for future decision making. The action will contribute to the fulfillment of HELCOM Recommendation 35-1.

Possible steps for implementation:

- 1) Meeting to transfer lessons learnt from OSPAR process.
- 2) Develop criteria on how to assess effectiveness of management for single MPAs and for the network as a whole, making use of work carried out in OSPAR and elsewhere.

To develop an approach to assess effectiveness is considered to require project support.

ALREADY AGREED: YES, the action specifies how the implementation of paragraph k) of HELCOM Recommendation 35-1 could be taken forward

HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 requires assessment of “the effectiveness of the management plans or measures of HELCOM MPAs by conducting monitoring, and where feasible scientific research programmes, which are directly connected to the conservation interests of HELCOM MPAs, including the placement of monitoring stations inside the MPAs” (para k).

This topic is related to existing tasks on the work plan of the Working Group (e.g. analysis of ecological coherence, task 4), but no specific activity has been launched to develop an approach for assessing effectiveness of spatial protection measures. Such approach needs to be developed to achieve paragraph k of Recommendation 35/1.

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: yes, OSPAR possible experience could be utilized

The Meeting is invited to note that this is already agreed action and can be supported with the resources from the proposed Life+ MareBaltic project “Optimizing effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas in the Baltic Sea Region, should it succeeds in obtaining financing” (2016-2018), and support possible steps for implementation.

ACTION 9: Activities to support conservation of Baltic Sea species and biotopes/habitats categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List (cf. 4.5.1, Annex 3, document 4-25)¹

Background information:

A set of actions aimed at improving the state of Red listed species and biotopes/habitats in the Baltic Sea are included in this action. For effective conservation several supporting analyses are planned to be undertaken with the view of coordinating measures as relevant (State and Conservation 1-2014).

Based on these analyses, area specific conservation programs to protect species and biotopes/habitats categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List could be developed for the following basins: A, B, C, D. When applicable, the implementation of the programs will be coordinated by relevant CPs.

In addition, the State and Conservation Working Group should develop “by 2017 guiding documents on conservation, recovery or action plans and/or related management measures for HELCOM threatened species, biotopes/habitats or species groups and their habitats”. These guidelines will directly support the implementation of area specific conservation programs and the improvement of HELCOM Red listed species and biotopes/habitats.

Analyses and guidelines will be developed with a Baltic Sea perspective, however to consider a wider geographic perspective as needed for migratory species. Coordinated measures could furthermore be relevant on a sub-basin scale.

The action will contribute to the BSAP goal to reach “A favorable conservation status of Baltic Sea biodiversity” [and more specifically to the implementation of the draft HELCOM Recommendation on conservation of the Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened]² aiming at the protection and conservation measures for HELCOM threatened species.

Proposed timetable: 2016-2020

Possible steps for implementation:

- 1) *to make an inventory of existing measures that will contribute to the improved status of threatened species and biotopes/habitats and analyze if they are sufficient to improve the state of those species*
- 2) *based on this gap analysis; identify the need for new measures and for which new measures it could be suitable to consider joint measures (regional plans) or coordinated measures (coordination of national measures)*
- 3) *Development of by 2017 guiding documents on conservation, recovery or action plans and/or related management measures for HELCOM threatened species, biotopes/habitats or species groups and their habitats*

State&Conservation to lead the activities. Agreed analyses on existing measures to be carried out by CPs. A Lead Country approach to be considered for development of the guidelines. It should also be considered to set up an intersessional HELCOM group to address conservation of species and biotopes/habitats.

AGREED ACTION: partly

This topic is related to existing tasks on the work plan of STATE&CONSERVATION (e.g. prepare proposals for measures for the conservation and protection of species and coastal and marine habitats and biotopes and

¹ DK cannot at the moment life the study reservation for this proposed action.

² Note that there is a study reservation by DK on the current draft Recommendation.

follow up on implementation of measures, task 6) and implementation steps one and two listed above have been agreed by State and Conservation 1-2015, Annex 2.

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed activities to support conservation of Baltic Sea species and biotopes/habitats categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List and support the possible steps for implementation.

ACTION 10: Development of joint principles for defining environmental targets for seabed habitats (cf. 4.6.1, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

Through the BalticBOOST project HELCOM will develop joint principles and good practices for defining environmental targets for the anthropogenic pressures affecting seabed habitats. To support the development of such environmental targets the project will, as a starting point, explore ways to determine how much disturbance from different activities that specific seabed habitats can tolerate while remaining in Good Environmental Status (GES). The targets need to ensure a sustainable level of human activities (safeguarding a sustainable future use of the marine resources), while not compromising progress towards GES.

The work will focus on some of the major impacts connected with fisheries using mobile bottom contacting gears (otter trawls, Danish seines, Scottish Seines, dredges, beam trawls) but will also address other pressures from human activities on seabed habitats (e.g. dredging, construction etc.).

Based on the information gathered the project will suggest principles and good practices for defining environmental targets.

The joint principles will be developed with a Baltic Sea perspective. Environmental targets will eventually likely need to be developed with more restricted perspective (e.g. by sub-basins and further specified for specific habitat types).

The activity will contribute to reaching the ecological objective under the biodiversity segment of the Baltic Sea Action Plan to “restoring and maintaining sea floor integrity at a level that safeguards the functions of the ecosystems”.

Proposed timetable: *BalticBOOST started in September 2015 and ends in December 2016.*

Possible steps for implementation: *The activities will be carried out under the BalticBOOST project. HELCOM GEAR and FISH Group as well as HOLAS II Core team will be consulted in the implementation of the project activity. Guidance for the development of principles will be provided through two workshops with expert participation from HELCOM Contracting Parties.*

Recommend to link the project actions to the update of the HELCOM Rec 36/2.

AGREED ACTION: YES

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: yes, principles could be applied in any sea area

The Meeting is invited to note that this already ongoing activity within HELCOM BalticBoost project.

ACTION 11: Adjustment or utilization of EU data collection framework to retrieve data for assessments and the development of management measures related to by-catch of species (cf. 4.7.1, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

HELCOM Input to: the new EC proposal for Data Collection Framework, new multiannual programs for data collection and regional DCF groups.

New DCF Regulation has been proposed in July 2015, in order to make DCF compliant with the reformed Common Fisheries Policy. It is proposed that the new DCF Regulation will define the frameworks for EU multiannual programme for data collection, which will be prepared after adoption of a Regulation. Multiannual programme for data collection will define only stable and basic variables, but other parameters will be more flexible and can be changed with time. The role of regional DCF groups in deciding in detail how the data should be collected is strengthened. This approach is in line with regionalisation under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy. Such an EU approach may provide room for more active role for HELCOM to communicate requests for data in the Baltic Sea.

This action should contribute to:

- *HELCOM contribution to DCF processes;*
- *Gaining needed data on by-catch for such actions as: management of endangered species, gathering information on threats, carrying out assessments of by-catch. Data could comprise fish species present on coastal waters, particularly those not covered by EU legislation, as well as information on marine mammals and bird by-catch.*
- *Gaining needed data on by-catch from chosen fishing fleet segments, recreational fishing;*
- *Indicator development (by-catch indicator- lacking of data, to establish thresholds or environmental limits for by-catch, to be coordinated with ASCOBANS).*

Obtaining data on by-catch of threatened and endangered marine species from DCF will be cost efficient, as these data can be collected together with “traditional” fishing data. Data from by-catch can be used for analysis of pressures assessments of marine environment, and for development of indicators. Consultation with BALTFISH, and cooperation with ICES and ASCOBANS, BSAC needed.

Currently DCF is designed for collecting fisheries data and does not take into account environmental elements. It is uncertain if focus on environmental aspects of new DCF could be achieved.

Problems with obtaining by-catch data from commercial and recreational fisheries could appear. It might also be challenging to design sampling

Proposed timetable: *to start in 2017 depending on an EU progress on this issue*

Possible steps for implementation:

1) Make an inventory of what kind of data from DCF will be useful for Baltic Sea region, and what kind of data will be needed for HELCOM Baltic Sea indicators and environment assessments (an actor for carrying out the work to be identified). Any successful implementation of measures prerequisites an effective monitoring. DCF could be a part of this implementation process.

2) Determine how the access to the data coming from data collection could be organised for HELCOM in order to ensure highest standards of primary data protection. New data from recreational fisheries is specifically relevant.

ALREADY AGREED: YES on general level

E.g. 2013 Ministerial Declaration 23 (B) as far as recreational fisheries is concerned.

Fish Group Work Plan: to identify the possible remaining data gaps in adequately assessing impacts of fisheries on marine ecosystems, including on bycatch (tasks no. 2 for 2015-2016) and address Regional Coordination Groups within the EU Data Collection Framework and ICES on how to improve data collection on recreational fisheries (task no. 5a); to provide tools for sustainable fishing practices, including to address by-catch of fish, birds and mammals (no. 6).

This specific description how the action can be taken forward will only be discussed at Fish 4-2015 (26-27 November 2015), outcome of the discussion will presented to the meeting.

The Meeting is invited to note that the proposed action builds on the existing work plan of the Fish Group and support possible steps for implementation in principle taking into account the outcome of Fish 3-2015 on this issue.

ACTION 12: Testing alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques to minimize by-catch through joint project/projects (cf. 4.7.2, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

The project HELCOM BALTFIMPA aimed at development of a selective and more environmental friendly fishing gears comparing to currently used, has not been continued after failing to obtain LIFE + financing. At the same time, measures in order to minimize negative impact of fisheries on protected species are urgently needed. Therefore, this is a proposal for continuation of activities proposed under HELCOM BALTFIMPA project with special emphasis on minimization of by-catch problem. Several of the topics are already agreed as a work plan of the HELCOM FISH group.

MAMBO³ project proposal should be taken into account. Outcome from the project could be provided to BALTFISH. ICES and ASCOBANS work to be taken into account.

Information provided by the project should be useful for decision makers to implement measures to reduce by-catch of threatened and endangered species, especially in MPAs.

Proposed timetable: 2016-2017

Possible steps for implementation: Possibly to focus on fewer tasks within 2016-2017.

HELCOM to serve as a coordination body, in cooperation with other relevant bodies, for mainly nationally funded activities regarding alternative gear development and testing.

- *Analyse traditional fishing gears*
- *Define potential by-catch "hot spots"*
- *Analyse and test usefulness of available alternative fishing gears,*
- *Analyse and test new fishing gears/fishing techniques;*
- *Prepare a HELCOM Recommendation concerning utilisation of alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques for by-catch "hot spots" in the Baltic Sea;*
- *Prepare guidelines for fishing in MPAs, including also by-catch "Hot spots", as well as education for fishermen*

ALREADY AGREED: YES

2013 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration 10 (B), 11 (B); 2010 Ministerial Declaration *IV Enforced actions and new challenges*.

Included in the Work Plan of the Fish Group (task No. 6, timeframe 2015-2017)

Few new elements in the proposed implementation steps ("hot spots" and a new HELCOM Recommendation)

BalticBoost project WP 3.2 will develop a tool for assessing the impacts of fishing gear on specific habitat types and species i.e. a further development of the generic tool development by BALTFIMPA.

The action is to be discussed in detail at Fish 3-2015 (26-27 November 2015), outcome of the discussion will presented to the meeting.

The Meeting is invited to note that the action as such is already agreed in HELCOM and support in principle the possible steps for implementation, to be further considered and taken forward within the work of the Fish Group and with support of the BalticBoost project.

³ MAMBO project – Management Actions and Conservation Measures for the Baltic Sea Odontocete.

ACTION 13: Regional monitoring programme on non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea (cf. 4.8.1, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Background information:

The Regional monitoring programme on non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea will provide objective information needed for the evaluation of the progress made towards achieving management goals defined by EU MSFD, EU IAS Regulation, IMO BWMC, and other legislation acts.

Regional monitoring program on NIS together with centralized NIS database is the only way to obtain objective, scientifically verified information needed for the evaluation of the progress towards management goals as well as for decision making (e.g. for granting Ballast water management exemptions under IMO BWMC). National monitoring programmes to be taken into account.

Proposed timetable: start in 2016, finalized 2018

Possible steps for implementation:

- 2016 (beginning) Workshop to discuss the aim and structure of the monitoring program.
- 2016/2017: Establishment of a regional database on non-indigenous species to accommodate monitoring data built on the existing AquaNIS database and the HELCOM/OSPAR risk assessment tool
- 2017/8. NIS Monitoring Guidelines, including different monitoring methods based on existing experience to be reviewed.

ALREADY AGREED: PARTLY

HELCOM Monitoring Manual recognizes the need to establish a HELCOM Monitoring Programme on NIS. The workplan of State and Conservation WG includes as task 1.1 to review existing monitoring guidelines or develop guidelines for new monitoring (sub)-programmes included in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual, including for NIS.

The finalized BALSAM project concluded that the present coordinated COMBINE and coastal fish monitoring should be complemented to obtain the required data on NIS for the exemption procedure under the BWM Convention and to obtain data for the needed indicators including the HELCOM core indicator on NIS (trends of new arrivals).

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: Yes, joint risk assessment procedure and database already in place/under development

The Meeting is invited to note the general level agreement on creating regional monitoring programme on non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea and support the proposed steps for implementation.

ACTION 14: To develop a Roadmap for Biofouling management (cf. 4.8.2, Annex 3, document 4-25)

Status of agreement/resources: *an initial idea for a new activity in HELCOM, proposed at the IG PoM workshop on 28 October 2015*

Background information: -

Proposed timetable: *start in 2016*

Possible steps for implementation: *Regional workshop to define steps towards development of biofouling management strategy (coordination with OSPAR)*

ALREADY AGREED: NOT YET

Related to the BSAP commitment to promote development of effective, environmentally friendly and safe TBT-free antifouling systems on ships.

Scope for coordination with OSPAR in short-term: indicated but not yet identified specifically.

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed action and decide as appropriate.