



Document title	Input on marine litter and underwater noise by HELCOM experts
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Agenda Item	2 - Further development of the draft Ministerial outcome
Submission date	3.11.2017
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	Outcome of HOD 52A-2017, para. 2.25-2.26

Background

HOD 52A-2017 noted that the EU will provide text on litter and noise as part of the draft Ministerial outcome, but also welcomed the updates of the expert networks. HOD 52A-2017 agreed to engage HELCOM marine litter network and underwater noise network in their upcoming meetings to prepare background material and proposals for possible next steps regarding marine litter and underwater noise ([Outcome of HOD 52A-2017](#), para. 2.25-2.26).

This document contains the input on marine litter and underwater noise by HELCOM experts as extracted from the recent meetings where these issues were raised:

- the Workshop on implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter ([WS RAP ML 2-2017](#)), held on 23 October 2017, in Vilnius, Lithuania,
- the Seventh Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (PRESSURE 7-2017), 24-26 October, back-to back with the marine litter workshop in Vilnius, Lithuania.
- the 1st Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Network on Underwater Noise ([EN-Noise 1-2017](#)) held on 4 October 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden.
- the Seventh Meeting of the State and Conservation Working Group (STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017), 23-27 October, Sopot, Poland.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and consider it in the further development of the draft Ministerial outcome.

Contracting Parties may wish to provide additional input on proposals for possible next steps regarding marine litter.

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Input on marine litter

The workshop on implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter considered the proposed evaluation of accomplishment of HELCOM actions related to marine litter as presented by the Secretariat and agreed that the Secretariat will revise the text according to the outcome of the workshop. Such revision has been made and is now included in the draft background report on implementation of HELCOM agreements submitted to this Meeting ([document 2-1](#), chapter 2.3).

The workshop suggested to initiate drafting of a HELCOM Recommendation on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). PRESSURE 7-2017 agreed that the Contracting Parties will organize national consultations and inform the Secretariat by 17 November 2017 on their coordinated position regarding the initiative to elaborate the HELCOM Recommendation. The meeting pointed out that no technical information on the substance of the Recommendation is requested at this stage ([Outcome of PRESSURE 7-2017](#), para. 3.15-3.18).

PRESSURE 7-2017 invited national experts to communicate their input to preparation of the Ministerial declaration 2018 with the heads of national delegations to make it of use at the HOD 52B-2017 meeting to be held on 13 November 2017 ([Outcome of PRESSURE 7-2017](#), para. 3.24).

In parallel, STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 considered the draft HELCOM Guidelines for monitoring beach litter, and especially the outstanding comments by Lithuania, which due to lack of time, have not yet been incorporated into the guidelines. The meeting agreed, in principle, on the guidelines, but agreed that the Lithuanian comments contained in the document should be discussed and agreed on by HELCOM EN-Marine Litter and requested the network to submit the guidelines for final approval by State and Conservation before transferring them to the Monitoring Manual ([document 2MA-10](#) and [Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017](#), para. 2MA.20-2MA-25).

Finally, the EU funded SPICE project has resulted in baseline calculations on the number of litter items by category of material per type of beach based on available data from 2012-2014 and 2015-2016. Top litter items for beach litter according to type of beach have also been identified. Further work is envisaged to identify them at sub-basin level. The results of the project so far will be presented to GEAR 17-2017.

Input on underwater noise

Underwater noise as part of the Ministerial Meeting 2018 was included in the agenda the meeting of the EN-Noise held on 4 October 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The meeting noted the 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting will be held 6 March in Brussels, Belgium. To support the planning of the Ministerial Meeting a background report is being prepared that summarizes the status of the Baltic Sea and the accomplishment of actions agreed in HELCOM across different themes.

The meeting noted the information provided by EU during HOD 52A-2017 that EU will provide text on noise, but also welcomed the updates of the noise HELCOM expert network and that HOD agreed to engage the EN-Noise in their upcoming meetings to prepare background material and proposals for possible next steps regarding underwater noise ([Outcome of HOD 52A-2017](#), para. 2.25-2.26).

The meeting noted the proposed evaluation of accomplishment of HELCOM actions related to underwater sound, reviewed the text from point of view of correctness and agreed on the revised document ([Outcome of EN-Noise 1-2017](#), para. 2.6-2.7). This amended text has been incorporated in the draft background report on implementation of HELCOM agreements submitted to this Meeting ([document 2-1](#), chapter 2.4). Additionally, the meeting provided their views on future steps and associated timetable to continue HELCOM work on underwater noise and agreed on the following priorities for work of the HELCOM EN-Noise ([Outcome of EN-Noise 1-2017](#), para. 2.3):

- Step 1: to continue working on knowledge gathering. The report compiling the internationally available reviews on underwater noise mitigation measures is to be revised in two years' time,

acknowledging the evolution on techniques (explosions, pile driving, seismic events) and knowledge. Also to compile knowledge on impacts and severity of impacts, since it is evolving very rapidly.

- Step 2:
 - Further development of the register of impulsive events is needed:
 - i. Currently the registry only compiles limited information (corresponding to information required as part of the MSFD); HELCOM countries may agree on reporting additional detailed information (position of the sources, number of pulses, and so on). The Meeting proposed to consider this in order to increase the accuracy and usefulness of the registry;
 - ii. There is a need to clarify minimum levels for activities below which reporting to the registry is not required, and to clarify how mitigation measures, such as bubble curtains, are dealt with. The Meeting noted the information provided by Germany that there is a German proposal on how to address this issue to be considered in the upcoming meeting of the TG Noise in November.
 - Discuss possibilities for, and potential added values of developing a common monitoring programme involving measurements of impulsive noise.
 - Further development of the continuous sound indicators:
 - Discussion of how to include higher frequency bands (tentative proposals 2 and 5 kHz third octave bands);
 - Further work on the assessment protocol of the pre-core indicator;
 - Address the issue of statistical power in the monitoring data, i.e. determining how the ability to detect statistically significant trends in the indicators depends on the number of years of monitoring data available.
- Step 3: the top priority in the next couple of years is establishing threshold values for the indicators. The need to establish threshold values is closely linked to the need for operationalisation of the pre-core indicators, also in line with the MSFD requirements for those HELCOM countries being EU members.

PRESSURE 7-2017 noted the issues prioritized by the expert group for further work, as included in the document informing on the current activities of the network ([document 4-1](#)).

STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 considered the draft HELCOM Guidelines for monitoring continuous noise, agreed, in principle, on them, but invited EN-Noise to update them according to the comments of the meeting and Germany, and to submit the revised guidelines to STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 for endorsement ([document 2MA-11](#) and [Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017](#), para 2MA.26-2MA.30).

STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 welcomed the revised proposal for a regional monitoring sub-program of continuous noise, noting that the presented timeline seems to fit well with the timeline of HOLAS III. The meeting supported in principle the proposed contents of the sub-program, but noted that since the document was submitted late, some Contracting Parties need more time for providing their national comments (by 8 December 2017). The meeting invited EN-Noise to initiate a discussion to facilitate a regionally coordinated approach to noise monitoring, based on the proposal outlined. The meeting invited EN-Noise to make improvements to the proposal based on the comments provided by State & Conservation national contacts and to present a further developed proposal for consideration of STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 ([document 2MA-12](#), [Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017](#), para. 2MA.2-2MA.9).