



<b>Document title</b>	Update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan
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<b>Agenda Item</b>	2- Preparations for HELCOM 39-2018 and HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018
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### Background

The outline for the Ministerial outcome presented at HOD 52-2017 (cf. document 2-7) indicates that a proposal for how update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan is to be done needs to be developed. The aim has been to have a more detailed proposal agreed by HODs while Ministers will focus on essence of the BSAP update (in the Ministerial outcome).

This document contains the further developed proposal for the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. It has been clarified in the document that the aim is to strengthen the BSAP implementation by 2021 according to the existing commitments and that the mandate for the BSAP update will be given by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and endorse the proposal and agree to submit it to HELCOM 39-2018 for adoption.

## **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 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 ecological objectives and relevant marine 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.

The following guidance on the update of BSAP [has been agreed] by the Contracting Parties at HELCOM 39-2018, to take effect on the basis of the mandate for the BSAP update to be given by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 6 March 2018.

### ***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”.

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

The core indicators will become part of the updated BSAP.

### **Existing actions**

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 is the basis of the commitment to strengthen the BSAP implementation by 2021.

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. [The update will not lead to a postponement of already agreed deadlines nor will it lead to a reduction of 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.

Actions may be decided not to be kept if jointly 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.

An overview comparing results of the first version of the State of the Baltic Sea report and the implementation of the BSAP show themes where Contracting Parties have come farther in the implementation of the BSAP. Overall, the accomplishment of joint and national actions is highest for the maritime segment.

### **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.

An overview comparing results of the first version of the State of the Baltic Sea report and the implementation of the BSAP 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 be utilized in proposing new actions.

### ***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.