



Document title	Proposals on an adjustment to the BSAP structure
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Background

One of the central activities of the Strategic plan for the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) update is to consider an adjustment of the overall structure of the BSAP (cf activity 2.2). The Strategic plan aims at an initial agreement at HOD 55-2018 to serve as the basis for further development. It is proposed to aim for the endorsement of the overall BSAP structure at the HOD meeting in December 2019 and adoption at HELCOM 2020 (at High-level Segment) (cf. document 3-2).

Agreements at HELCOM 39-2018 and the HELCOM 2018 Ministerial Meeting have given the following direction for the structure of the updated BSAP.

- The 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration committed to using the water and ocean related goals, and targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a framework for updating the BSAP (para17).
- HELCOM 39-2018 adopted a proposal for the BSAP update that indicates that existing segments should remain while new ecological objectives can be developed for additional issues, for example, marine litter, underwater sound and seabed damage and disturbance ([document 2-6 Rev1](#)).
- The Strategic plan also identifies GEAR to review a proposed adjustment to the overall structure of the BSAP, and Working and Experts Groups to review the existing HELCOM ecological objectives and to propose possible amendments.

GEAR 19-2018 considered how the BSAP structure can be adjusted to meet the above guidance. This document presents the outcome of discussions and proposals from the Group based on an initial proposal by the Secretariat.

The term 'BSAP structure' as used in this document refers to thematic segments, goals, and objectives while the 'BSAP document' refers to the full text of the Baltic Sea Action Plan which will build on the BSAP structure.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider and support in general the proposed approach to the structure of the updated BSAP,
- agree to include sustainable development goals and targets in the narrative of the updated BSAP document,
- agree to include overarching principles from the Helsinki Convention and other relevant policies in the pre-ambule of the updated BSAP document,
- agree on the proposed adjustment of the main segments of the BSAP structure, noting that the detailed content under each segment is still to be further defined,

- endorse the guidance for the review of existing and proposal on new ecological objectives,
- consider the proposal to change the term “ecological objectives” to “environmental objectives”,
- take note of the further development of the supporting framework for the BSAP update based on identifying action areas, management objectives and ecological objectives,
- consider how to approach the financing segment in the process to update the BSAP.

Incorporation of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

To use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets as a framework for the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan is a central guidance from the 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration. To support such implementation a comparison of goals, objectives and targets from SDGs as well as the CBD Biodiversity Strategic Plan and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was carried out (see [document 3-2](#), GEAR 19-2018). The conclusion is that the SDG targets differ considerably in their formulation from HELCOM goals objectives. SDG targets reflect for example activities, management objectives and drivers while HELCOM goals ecological objectives almost exclusively address the desired status of the environment. A direct incorporation of SDG targets in the HELCOM goals or ecological objectives would thus result in a substantial change compared to the original BSAP structure.

In order to keep close to the current BSAP structure GEAR supported for SDG goals and targets to be reflected in the narrative of the updated BSAP document while not being incorporated into the HELCOM goals and ecological objectives. Reference could also be made as appropriate to the Aichi targets of the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity¹. In the narrative of the updated BSAP document this could be presented e.g. as:

“Through these actions we will ensure further improvement of water quality by increasing the effectiveness of waste water treatment, thereby also contributing to reaching SDG target 6.3 (and Aichi target 8)”.

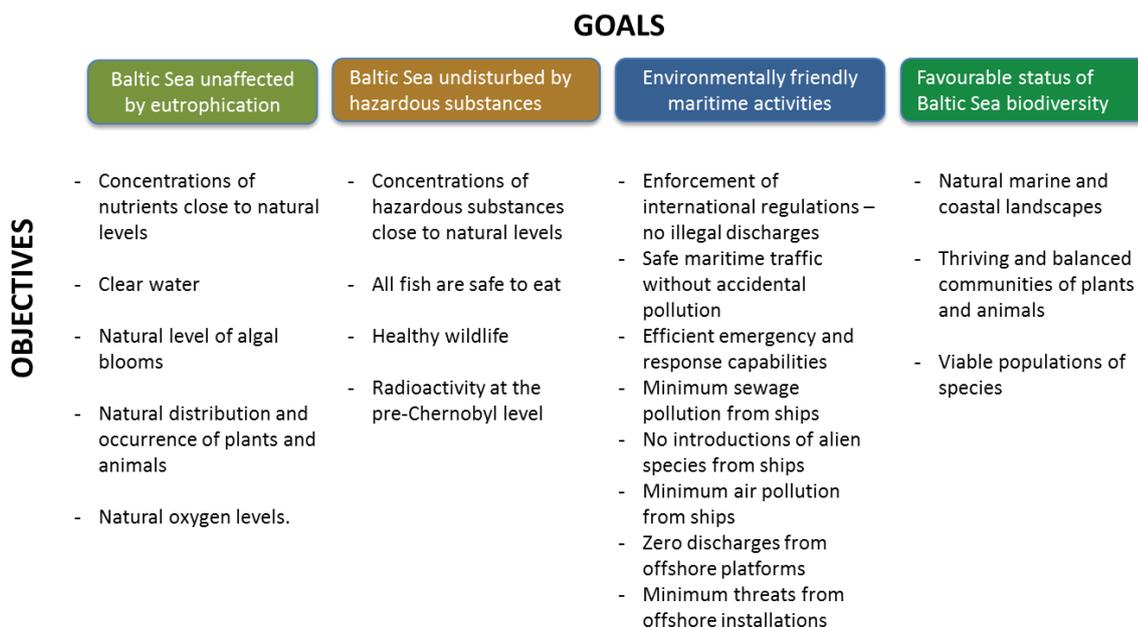


Figure 1. Goals and objectives of the current Baltic Sea Action Plan. Ecological objectives for Eutrophication, Hazardous substances and Biodiversity reflect the desired state of the environment. Under the Maritime segment the objectives are called “management objectives” and focus on activities and desired level of pressures.

¹ The current CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is for the period 2011-2020. An update post-2020 is under development.

Incorporation of cross-cutting issues, including higher level aims

The Helsinki Convention and other relevant policies such as the UN SDGs address a number of higher level aims, for example:

- Implementation based on ecosystem approach
- Reach good environmental status
- Be based on pre-cautionary principle
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Clean and environmentally sound technologies
- Efficient use of natural resources
- Integration of climate change into policies

Such higher level aims are proposed to be addressed in the pre-amble text of the BSAP document since they are relevant for all the BSAP segments. The pre-amble text is furthermore proposed to be kept within the limit of 3 pages as in the current BSAP. GEAR 19-2018 suggested to write the pre-amble as a light and inspirational text. Climate change was proposed to be addressed as a key component of the pre-amble as well as under the respective segment of the BSAP.

Adjustment to the BSAP structure

Adjustment to the BSAP structure has been suggested as part of the guidance and Strategic Plan for the BSAP update to better reflect the current topics addressed in HELCOM. This includes marine litter, underwater noise, and seabed loss and disturbance.

GEAR 19-2019 discussed and supported an adjustment of the BSAP structure that maintains the four original segments and goals but that expands on the topics covered by the segments (Table 1).

Table 1. Proposed adjustment of the BSAP structure.

Eutrophication	Pollution	Maritime activities	Biodiversity
Input from diffuse sources, point sources and atmosphere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nutrients - organic matter 	Input from diffuse sources, point sources and atmosphere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hazardous substances Input from all relevant activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marine litter - underwater noise 	Impact from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shipping, incl. response - Offshore installations - Fishing (species removal and impacts on the seabed) - Construction works - Extraction of mineral resources - Dredging - Aquaculture 	Conservation measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marine protected areas - Restoration - Restocking Impacts from species removal (hunting, harvesting)

Shortly, the proposed structure includes two major revisions. Firstly, hazardous substances, marine litter and underwater noise are combined to a revised segment with the tentative name "Pollution". Secondly, the segment on Maritime activities is broadened to also include other sea-based activities: fishing, aquaculture, and other activities having an impact on the seafloor, some of which are included in other segments of the current BSAP. GEAR 19-2018 proposed that the name of the segment on Maritime activities may need adjustment to reflect the broader set of pressures addressed under the segment.

Eutrophication remains as in the current BSAP while the segment on Biodiversity changes for example as fishing is moved to the segment on Maritime activities. The HELCOM focal area Maritime Spatial Planning would in this structure be linked to the segment on Maritime activities while Marine Protected Areas remain under Biodiversity.

It should be noted that the proposed segments are not directly linked to the HELCOM working structure and that several Working groups may be involved in implementing the individual segments.

In Table 1, the second row provides examples of pressure, activities and conservation measures that could be covered by actions under the respective segment. The details is still to be further developed but if endorsed by HOD it will serve as a basis for development of new ecological objectives and continued mapping of HELCOM ecological objectives against goals and targets of other policies. Annex 1 shows how the proposed structure can be linked to the UN SDGs, Aichi targets and MSFD.

In the current BSAP there are also a number of segments that are not linked to ecological objectives; development of assessment tools and methodologies, awareness raising and capacity building, financing, and implementation and review of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. How to address these topics in the updated action plan is proposed mainly for discussion at HOD June 2019. However, this meeting might wish to consider how to approach the financing segment in the process to update the BSAP

Guidance of the review of ecological objectives

The draft work plan indicates a review of ecological objectives by Working Groups as an activity for spring meetings 2019 with the aim of preparing in initial proposal for consideration by HOD in June 2019. In addition to reviewing existing ecological objectives, e.g. to check if they are up to date, additional ecological objectives need to be formulated for new topics covered by the updated BSAP structure.

The original ecological objectives have been formulated as a tool to communicate the aim of the action plan to the general public in broad terms. GEAR 19-2018 proposed to closely follow this approach also for the updated BSAP and gave the following general guidance:

- maintain the formulation of ecological objectives to reflect the desired state,
- maintain the aim that the objectives should be easy to communicate,
- the objectives should not be too many, although maximum numbers cannot be given at this time,
- the maritime segment can maintain focus on management objectives but it is anticipated that the segment will also include ecological objectives and/or cross-references to the relevant ecological objectives in other segments.

GEAR was furthermore of the view that climate change is not a directly relevant topic for the ecological objectives.

Since the ecological objectives are focusing on the desired state it is proposed that the review of Eutrophication, Hazardous substances and Biodiversity is in first step considered by the State and Conservation Working Group followed by review and contribution by other relevant Working Groups. For the segment on Maritime activities the review is in a first step proposed to be carried out by Maritime (shipping and offshore installations), Response, Fish (species removal and impacts on the seabed) and Pressure (aquaculture, impacts on the seabed from other activities). Relevant HELCOM expert groups, such as EN-Marine Litter and EN-Noise, are expected to be involved upon request by the Working Groups.

GEAR 19-2018 discussed a possible change of name from 'ecological objectives' to 'environmental objectives' in order to broaden the policy linkages and proposed to HOD 55-2018 to consider this possibility in the further development of the updated BSAP.

Supporting framework for the BSAP update

To help structuring the text of the updated BSAP and the future follow-up of implementation a supporting framework is proposed to be prepared. The framework is briefly proposed to be based on identifying the following:

Action areas to clarify the intention and aim of HELCOM actions and agreements. Examples of action areas in the field of eutrophication are ‘sustainably managed agriculture’ or ‘effective waste water treatment’. Identifying action areas would provide for a clear link to SDG targets. These aims could be followed-up by assessing the implementation of strategic HELCOM actions, e.g. the development of a recycling strategy.

Management objectives to clarify the desired effect of measures and HELCOM actions (as is in the Maritime segment of the current BSAP). In its simplest case it could be to “minimize input of nutrients”. Management objectives can be followed up by pressure targets with associated indicators (e.g. MAI/CART scheme) or conservation targets for biodiversity (e.g. targets for MPAs). At present there are only a few targets defined for total pressures in HELCOM but for some topics other HELCOM agreements, e.g. recommendations, include reduction targets for specific activities such as wastewater treatment plants. Another example is the NOx emission target for shipping under the Baltic Sea NECA. Follow-up would primarily be quantitative i.e. for Contracting Parties to report on the reduction in relation to the pressure targets.

Ecological objectives to identify, as currently, the desired state of the environment. They can be followed-up by HELCOM core indicators representing the status of the environment. Follow-up would be quantitative being based on threshold values for HELCOM core indicators.

	BSAP main text	BSAP annexes	Follow-up
Action areas	Mention as a frame for strategic actions and measures		Implementation check of strategic HELCOM actions
Management objectives	Mention to provide understanding of pressure targets. Include central targets in main text.	List of all pressure targets and links to strategic actions	Evaluation of progress towards pressure targets
Ecological objectives	List to provide vision for state of the environment	List of core indicators and links to pressure targets and ecological objectives	Assessment of status core indicators

Figure 2. How action areas, management objectives and ecological objectives could be incorporated into the BSAP document and associated annexes and how they could be used to follow-up the implementation of the updated BSAP in the future.

The supporting framework could also help structuring the text of the BSAP document by create a consistent links between actions, activities, pressures and status under each segment. For further examples see [document 3-2](#) to GEAR 19-2018.

GEAR 19-2018 supported the further development of the framework. The next step is to map HELCOM agreements, pressure targets and status indicators according to the framework and the adjusted BSAP structure as agreed by HOD 55-2018. The mapping will also help identifying gaps in the HELCOM agreement and follow-up system and thereby support the identification of new actions.

Annex 1 Links between the proposed updated four segment BSAP structure and SDG targets, Aichi targets and MSFD descriptors.

Marked cells should be read as: measures/actions taken under one policy will support reaching the goals and targets for the other policy. Reinforcement can be expected in both directions. Links to the BSAP biodiversity segment have only been indicated when conservation measures can be expected while impacts on biodiversity are not considered here (since measures to achieve all the listed targets can be expected to have an impact on biodiversity). Since climate change is not included as a separate BSAP segment the relevant policy targets for climate change have been indicated as a horizontal topic i.e. to be included in strategic actions or ecological objectives as relevant under the respective theme. Aichi targets related to awareness raising and knowledge are not included in this table.

SDG Aichi MSFD	Eutrophication	Haz substances	Maritime	Biodiversity
SDG2.4 Resilient agricultural practices that help maintain ecosystems				
SDG6.3 Reducing pollution, eliminating dumping, minimizing release				
SDG12.2 Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.				
SDG12.4 Sound management of chemicals/wastes throughout life cycle				
SDG13.2 Climate change measures in national policies, strategies, planning				
SDG14.1 Reduce marine pollution of all kinds				
SDG14.2 Sustainably manage/protect marine and coastal ecosystems				
SDG14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification				
SDG14.4 End overfishing and...destructive fishing practices				
SDG14.5 Conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas				
SDG14.6 Prohibit fisheries subsidies contributing to overcapacity/overfishing				
SDGT14c Implementing international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea				
AichiT3 Incentives harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out				
AichiT4 Implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption				
AichiT5 The rate of loss of all natural habitats, is at least halved				
AichiT6 All fish, invertebrate stocks, aquatic plants are harvested sustainably				
AichiT7 Areas under agriculture, aquaculture, forestry managed sustainably				
AichiT8 Pollution not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity				
AichiT9 Manage pathways to prevent NIS introduction and establishment.				
Aichi T10 Multiple anthropogenic pressures on vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized				
AichiT11 At least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, are conserved				
AichiT12 Extinction of known threatened species has been prevented				
AichiT14 Ecosystems providing essential services... restored and safeguarded				
AichiT15 Contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced				
D1 Biodiversity is maintained				
D2 Non-indigenous species do not adversely alter the ecosystem				
D3 The population of commercial fish species is healthy				
D4 Elements of food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction				
D5 Eutrophication is minimised				
D6 The sea floor integrity ensures functioning of the ecosystem				
D8 Concentrations of contaminants give no effects				
D9 Contaminants in seafood are below safe levels				
D10 Marine litter does not cause harm				
D11 Introduction of energy does not adversely affect the ecosystem				