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Background

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme (BONUS) arranged the international BONUS-HELCOM 8th stakeholder conference titled 'Research and Innovation for Sustainability', on 6 November 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The conference aimed to look forward, focusing on coming challenges and possible solutions regarding research priorities and needs to support implementation of international policy in a wide range of fields. Research and innovation results from recent BONUS projects, structured around the shared UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), i.e. SDG 13 (climate action), 14 (oceans) and 15 (life on land) were presented by the project leads. The conference was divided into two consecutive sessions, Biodiversity and the Human Dimension. In each session a number of research results relating to the theme were presented by BONUS, which was followed by a policy panel discussion.

Special focus was placed on dialogue between policy and science, striving to identify links to, and needs under, key sustainability policies such as e.g. the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Blue Growth Agenda.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

The 7th BONUS Forum and the 8th HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan Stakeholder Conference: Research and Innovation for Sustainability

Since 2006 HELCOM has organized open stakeholder conferences on specific themes, to bring public attention to, and raise awareness of, HELCOM work and engage a larger numbers of people in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. The conferences have focused on e.g. developing and consulting the content of the BSAP and its implementation, on maritime spatial planning and financing and, jointly with BONUS, on science needs to support ecosystem approach implementation.

To draw from the lessons of their respective initiatives for improving the Baltic Sea environment, BONUS and HELCOM invited stakeholders from the region to the [Joint BONUS-HELCOM Conference: Research and Innovation for Sustainability](#) that took place in Copenhagen on 6 November 2018.

The conference aimed to reinforce and further develop the synergies of HELCOM and BONUS in association with key strategic actors in northern European regional seas – OSPAR, ICES, JPI Oceans – in efforts related to environmental policy and sustainable development of the northern European regional seas. The conference was opened by Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of HELCOM and Mr Andris Andrusaitis, BONUS Acting Executive Director and was moderated by Ms. Ottilia Thoreson, Director of WWF Baltic Sea Ecoregion. The program and presentations from the conference can be found on the BONUS website ([here](#)).

Special focus was placed on dialogue between policy and science, striving to identify links to, and needs under, key sustainability policies such as e.g. the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Blue Growth Agenda. The conference was well frequented, with approximately 130 participants divided almost evenly between policy and science.

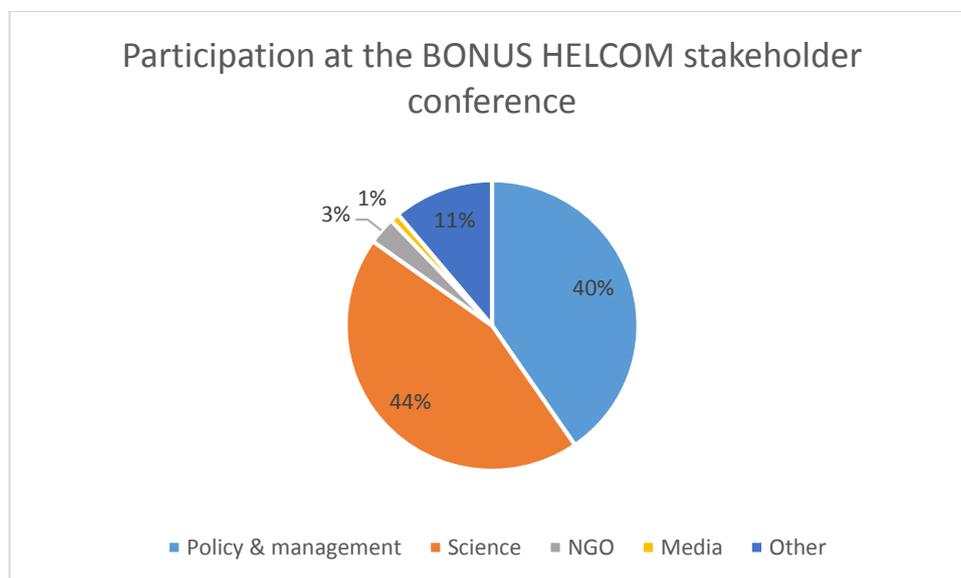


Figure 1. Poll results on affiliation from participants at the joint BONUS HELCOM stakeholder conference on Research and Innovation for Sustainability.

It recognized that future work by strategic actors such as HELCOM on implementing and strengthening sustainability policies such as e.g. UN 2030 Agenda, the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EU Blue Growth Agenda, as well as the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), create a further demand for new knowledge and information. The decision of the UN to dedicate the next decade to ocean science and sustainable development recognizes

science as a prerequisite for managing the ocean sustainably. A clear majority of the participants of the conference were of the opinion that cross sectoral cooperation has improved (Figure 2) but acknowledged that continued dialogue and enhanced cooperation between research and policy, both inside and outside the Baltic Sea region, is one of the foremost mechanism needed to fulfil foreseen upcoming knowledge needs.

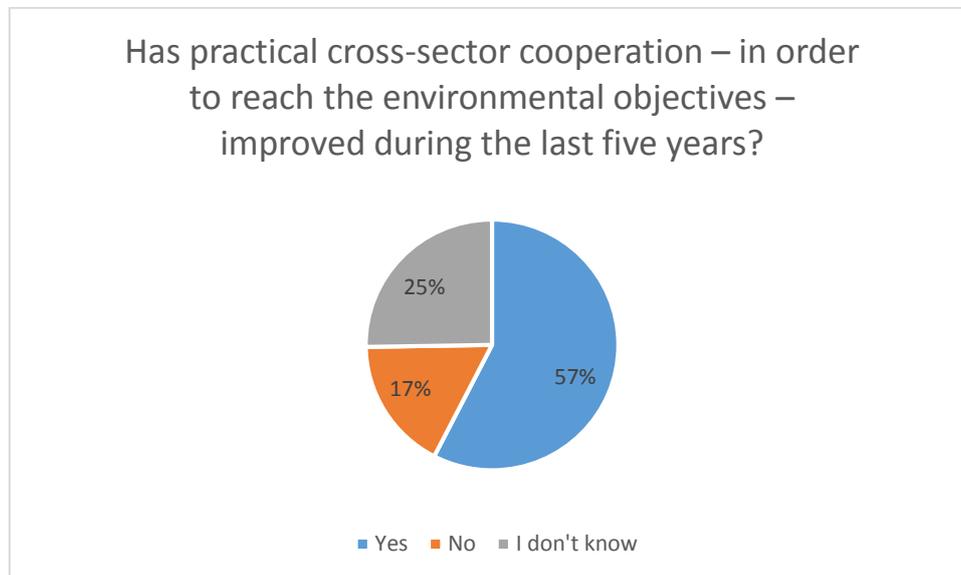


Figure 2. Poll results on cross sectoral cooperation from participants at the joint BONUS HELCOM stakeholder conference on Research and Innovation for Sustainability.

Structured around the shared UN 2030 Agenda's sustainable development goals i.e. SDGs 13 (climate action), 14 (oceans) and 15 (life on land), the conference presented research and innovation results to support progress towards implementing key marine policies, derived from several BONUS projects ending in 2018. HELCOM and OSPAR presented the State of the Baltic Sea and Intermediate Assessment reports respectively.

Each presentation session was followed by a policy panel. The intention was for the panelists to bring policy experience and expertise to the conference, e.g. in the form of current and foreseen science and research needs from a policy perspective. Not just in relation to the presented material, but also on a broader scale. This was done to give the conference an overall air of looking forward, using work that has already been done to propel focus on coming challenges and possible solutions.

The discussion was partly guided by interaction with the audience using a Slido, an interactive tool that lets the moderator see questions from the audience in real time throughout the session. The Slido also allowed the audience to pose questions that could be answered later, after the conference ended, as well as allowing the organizers to present polls and the participants to prioritize which questions generated the most audience interest.

Further and improved understanding of climate change impacts as well as improvements in monitoring were highlighted in several presentations, as was the importance of a holistic approach with regards to both science and management to guide further management actions.

The importance of trans-boundary, regional and interregional approaches was a reoccurring theme throughout the conference. This included the importance of actively engaging in processes beyond the Baltic Sea and sharing the experiences and best practices of the region to impact on the global agenda e.g. through the Our Oceans conference and the preparation of the World Ocean Assessment II.

The participants' view of the conference was positive (see figure 3 for breakdown).

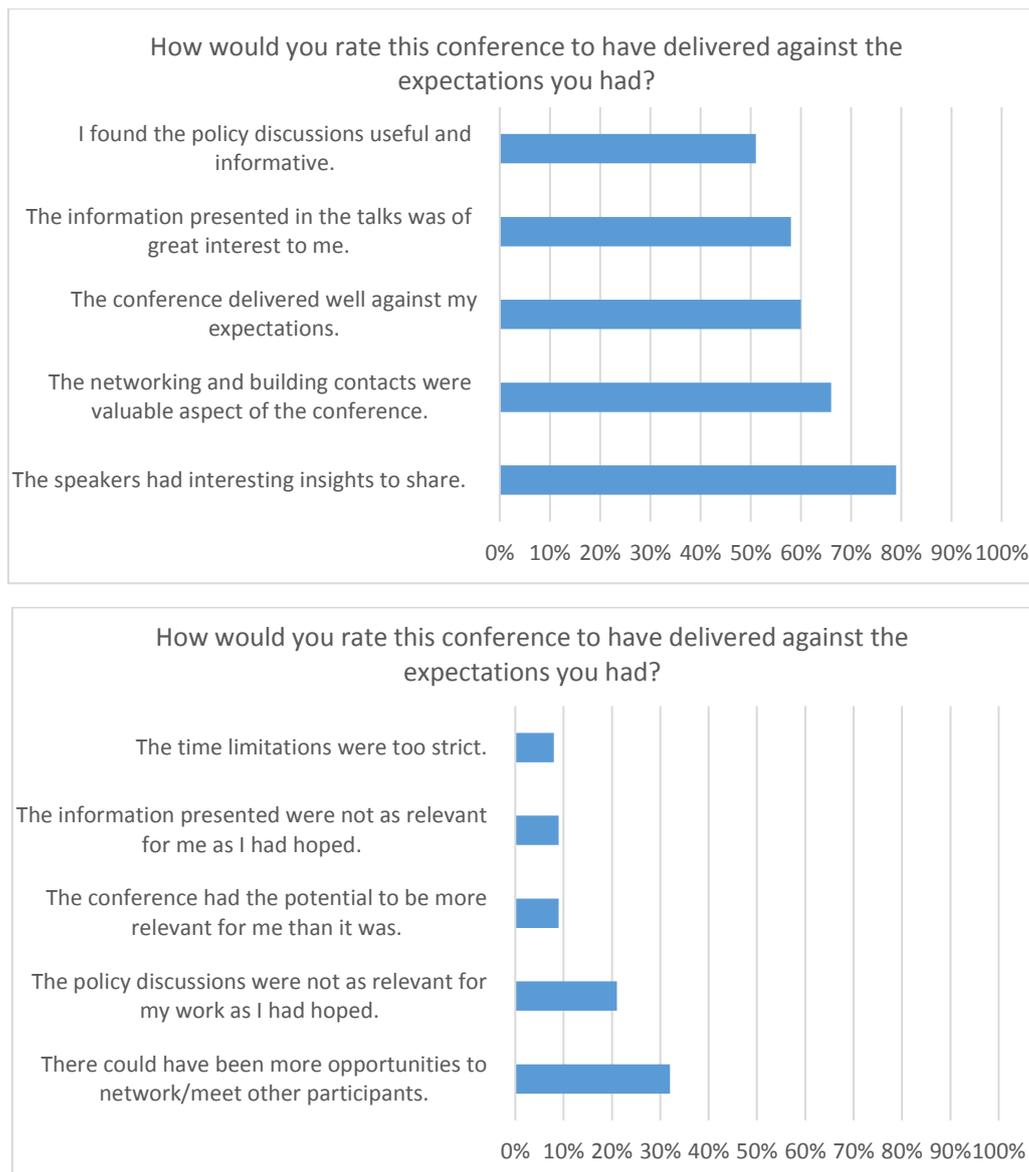


Figure 3. Poll results on rating the different aspects of the conference, collected from participants at the joint BONUS HELCOM stakeholder conference on Research and Innovation for Sustainability, top pane presenting positive ratings, bottom pane representing suggestions for further improvement.

At the conference, BONUS announced its transition towards the wider Baltic and North Sea Support and Coordination Action (BANOS CSA) that will broaden its scope from the Baltic Sea to more European regional seas. This was addressed with particular focus on how the programme can provide support for the environmental policy and sustainable blue growth agendas both in the Baltic Sea and North Sea regions.

BANOS CSA will advance cooperation between the Baltic and North Sea sub-basins, and is an important step towards a stronger involvement of the Baltic Sea region at a worldwide level, notably on providing solutions for global ocean management. Set to start in November 2018, BANOS CSA is constituted of major research and innovation funds and organizations from 12 countries, as well as of four transnational bodies – HELCOM, ICES, JPI Oceans, and OSPAR. Funded within the EU's Horizon 2020 framework and set to run for 30 month, BANOS CSA will enable joint Baltic Sea and North Sea research and innovation for healthier seas. The extensive BONUS and HELCOM legacy, and BANOS CSA, the future research programme that will come out of it can be seen as a contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science.