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Background

One of the main activities of the strategic plan for the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) update, agreed at HOD 54-2018, is to consider an adjustment of the overall structure of the BSAP (cf. activity 2.2). The aim is to endorse a tentative adjustment of the structure at the HOD meeting in December 2019 and to adopt the new structure at the High-level segment of HELCOM 41-2020.

The process of adjusting the BSAP structure is outlined in the strategic plan and involves:

- the GEAR Group in the review of the overarching structure, i.e. segments and goals,
- HELCOM technical Working Groups in the review of the existing HELCOM ecological objectives and development of tentative new objectives.

In the guidance for the BSAP update, agreed at HELCOM 39-2018, it is stated 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”.

HOD 55-2018 considered a proposal on the BSAP structure and made a provisional agreement on the following ([Outcome HOD 55-2018](#), para 3.17):

- to address marine litter under the segment on Hazardous substances and to consider changing the name to ‘Hazardous substances and marine litter’;
- to include under the Maritime segment a broader set of sea-based activities, e.g. construction work, dredging, extraction of mineral resources, fishing, and consider changing the name of the segment to ‘Sea-based activities’. The topics underwater noise and loss and disturbance of the seabed were tentatively assigned to this segment.

HOD 55-2018 furthermore agreed to come back to the ‘BSAP structure’ when it has been clarified how different activities and pressures would be linked to the different segments (Outcome, para 3.17). This document includes an interim mapping, based on e.g. results from HOLAS II, PLC, HELCOM TAPAS project, to provide an overview of the likely distribution of activities and pressure for each BSAP segment (section 1). An evaluation of how much different activities contribute to specific pressures is also ongoing through the analyses of sufficiency of measures (SOM) and will contribute to identifying the activities and pressures of most concern in the Baltic Sea region (see document 2-3). Also, it should be noted that the lists indicate under which segments that activities and pressures would belong in case that there is an HELCOM action that addresses them. As of to date there are however several activities and pressures that are not addressed by HELCOM actions ([see e.g. document 2-4 to HELCOM 40-2019](#)).

The document furthermore includes an example of how the segment on eutrophication could be outlined in the updated BSAP (section 2). The outline is based on a supporting framework which includes the formulation of ecological objectives, management objectives and action areas for each of the four segments as presented to HOD 55-2018 (HOD 55-2018, document 3-3, Outcome para 3.18).

With regard to comments by Working Groups on the structure of the updated BSAP the following can be noted:

- Pressure 10-2019 did not explicitly address the 'BSAP structure' but in the discussion on ecological objectives for eutrophication and hazardous substances the Pressure Working Group proposed that the objectives should remain as they are, possibly with minor modifications, with the reasoning that they are still relevant and in several cases not achieved yet, and that there is an important value to stay close to the current objectives since they have become commonly recognized. (para DS-18).
- State & Conservation 10-2019 noted that the provisional agreement on the 'BSAP structure' implies that impacts from fisheries will tentatively be addressed under the segment on Sea-based activities and not under the segment on Biodiversity which is the case in the current BSAP. The Meeting proposed that by-catch from fisheries should still be considered under the segment on Biodiversity since it has a direct effect on the state of species and that this would also comply with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive where by-catch is considered as a criterion under Descriptor 1 on biodiversity (para 8J-20).
- GEAR 20-2019 supported in general the proposed outline of the 'BSAP document'. The further elaboration by the GEAR Group on the tentative activities and pressures to be addressed under each BSAP segment is reflected in this document. GEAR furthermore recommended that the structure of updated BSAP should remain close to the current structure and that the aim should remain for the goals and objectives to communicate the core ambition of HELCOM work to the wider community. The Meeting also took note of the consideration that the segment 'Hazardous substances and marine litter' could be two separate segments, or, that the listed pressures and activities should be divided according to the two headline topics of the segment (para 5-23). It was furthermore proposed that the segment should only refer to 'litter' rather than 'marine litter' since the segment as such is focused on land-based activities. The proposals to list activities and pressures separately and to remove the word 'marine' from the goal have been implemented in this document.

It can be noted that in the current Baltic Sea Action Plan the text is organized according to the four main existing segments and goals and a number of additional cross-cutting segments (e.g. development of assessment tools and methodologies, awareness raising and capacity building, financing). The potential organization of the BSAP presented in this document is limited to the main segments and goals while other cross-cutting segments will be discussed at a later stage.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider the activities and pressures that would tentatively be addressed under the respective segment of the updated BSAP according to the provisional agreement by HOD 55-2018 (section 1, Boxes 1-4) and use the information to further elaborate on the 'BSAP structure' as relevant,
- support to use a provisional 'BSAP structure' (section 1) as decided by HOD as a basis for ongoing work of HELCOM Working Groups on the BSAP update,
- consider the proposed outline of a BSAP segment in the final 'BSAP document' (section 2) and agree as appropriate,
- take note of the aim to agree on the 'BSAP structure' at HOD in December 2019.

Use of terms

The following definitions apply to differentiate the structural elements of the BSAP from the development of updated Baltic Sea Action Plan as whole:

- 'BSAP structure' refers to the structural elements, i.e. the thematic segments, goals, and objectives. The structure of the BSAP provides for an outward communication to the wider community on the overall aims and objectives of HELCOM work. In the current BSAP the same structure is also used to organize the 'BSAP document'.
- 'BSAP document' refers to the full text and content of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan. The whole plan, which may take the form of a document as well as electronically, will be a substantial record that also outlines HELCOM higher level aims and agreements on actions to reach good status.

1) Tentative 'BSAP structure'

Segments and goals

Development of goals and ecological objectives for the current BSAP was based on work initiated in HELCOM in 2003, further developed through the HELCOM EcoQo project, financed by the EU, and culminating in 2006 with the adoption of a HELCOM Vision, Strategic Goals and Ecological Objectives ([HELCOM 27-2006, para 2.1, Annex 3](#)).

The Vision describes the overall ambition of HELCOM and HOD 55-2018 agreed that the existing Vision will remain in the updated BSAP. Strategic Goals describe the major threats¹ to the Baltic Sea as identified at that time, and Ecological Objectives describe central characteristics of a healthy sea in a generalised way. With regard to the formulation of goals and objectives, the aim was to communicate HELCOM's ambition with a wider stakeholder community ranging from scientists and politicians to the general public.

HOD 55-2018 agreed on a provisional structure of the updated BSAP and also indicated where the new ecological objectives on marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance to the seabed would fit to the updated structure. As proposed by GEAR 20-2019, the word 'marine' has been omitted from the goal on hazardous substances and litter (Outcome GEAR 20-2019, para 5-23).

VISION (HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will be maintained):

A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities

SEGMENT and GOALS (original):

Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication

Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances

Environmentally friendly maritime activities

Favourable status of Baltic Sea biodiversity

SEGMENT and GOALS (as implied by HOD 55-2018):

Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication

Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and marine litter

Environmentally friendly maritime sea-based activities

Favourable status of Baltic Sea biodiversity

New objectives:
– marine litter

New objectives:
– loss and disturbance to the seabed
– underwater noise

Figure 1. Overall segments and goals as iterated from original BSAP HOD 55-2018.

¹ For biodiversity the major threat was described as loss of biodiversity caused by eutrophication, hazardous substances and maritime activities.

Activities and pressures associated to the segments

This document uses the provisional agreement on a 'BSAP structure' from HOD 55-2018 (Figure 1) as a starting point for outlining the activities and pressures that would tentatively be addressed under each BSAP segment. Annex 1 presents the interim activity-pressure linkages based on mapping of land-based and sea-based activities vs proposed BSAP segments and the pressures they are causing, and mapping of conservation activities vs ecosystem components as used in HOLAS II.

If the updated BSAP is based on the proposed 'BSAP structure' provisionally agreed by HOD 55-2018, the following can be noted with regard to activities, pressures and potential overlaps (Boxes 1-4, Annex 1 Tables 1-4):

- Pressures from land-based activities primarily contributes to eutrophication, hazardous substances and litter to the marine environment (Annex 1, Tables 1-2). The segments on 'Eutrophication' and 'Hazardous substances and litter' would thus be mainly focused on actions related to land-based activities which is also the case in the current BSAP. This could also be highlighted in the heading of the segment on 'Eutrophication' and 'Hazardous substances and litter' in the 'BSAP document' (see Box 1 and 2).
- Pressures in terms input of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter overlap between land-based and sea-based activities.
- Sea-based activities capture a number of additional pressures that are primarily causing biological and physical disturbance to the environment (Annex 1, Table 3). The segment on 'Sea-based activities' includes the type of activities that are considered in Maritime Spatial Planning which could have prominent place in such segment.
- Sea-based activities are in general linked to more types of pressure that are likely to be of concern to the Baltic Sea environment.
- The Maritime segment is no longer visible as a single segment but as one of the activities addressed under sea-based activities, but can be highlighted in the heading of a segment on 'Sea-based activities' (see Box 3)
- The segment on 'Biodiversity' becomes focused on management actions to protect and conserve biodiversity, since the main pressures on biodiversity are covered by other segments (Annex 3). Marine Protected Areas would continue to be a prominent management measure.
- Overlaps between segments are unavoidable and the use of cross-referencing between segments of the 'BSAP document' would be needed, a strategy that also is used in the current BSAP.

The implication for activities and pressures to be addressed under each segment of the 'BSAP document' is presented in Boxes 1-4. It should be noted that HELCOM Working Groups have initiated the review of existing HELCOM objectives and the development of new objectives, including management objectives for eutrophication, hazardous substances, marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance to the seabed. The review and development of HELCOM objectives will be an iterative process aimed at being presented for an agreement at HOD in December 2019. The initial proposals are presented in Working Papers from the respective meeting ([Pressure 10-2019, DS WP.1](#), [State&Conservation 10-2019, 8J, WP.1](#)) and will be added to the structure at a later stage.

It should be recalled that the 'BSAP structure' is not directly linked to the HELCOM Working Group structure; several Working Groups could be involved in the implementation of actions under each segment in the updated BSAP.

Box 1. Eutrophication; input from land-based activities

Goal addressed:

- Baltic Sea unaffected by Eutrophication

Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients and organic matter

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching the objectives for eutrophication is a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Favourable conservation status of biodiversity'.
- Reaching the goal and objectives for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication.

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Urban land uses (e.g. stormwater)
- Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
- Aquaculture, land-based

Box 2. Hazardous substances and litter, input from land-based activities

Goal addressed:

- Baltic sea undisturbed by Hazardous substances and litter

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching the objectives for hazardous substances and litter is a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Favourable conservation status of biodiversity'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirements for reaching the goal for hazardous substances and litter.

Pressures addressed:

- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of litter

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions with regard to;

- 1) Input of hazardous substances:
 - Agriculture (e.g. pesticides, pharmaceuticals)
 - Forestry
 - Industrial uses (e.g. oil and gas refineries, industrial plants)
 - Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
 - Production of energy (fossil fuel, nuclear)
- 2) Input of litter:
 - Industrial uses (e.g. oil and gas refineries, industrial plants)
 - Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
 - Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
 - Urban uses (e.g. construction sites)
 - Transportation (e.g. release from tires)

Box 3. Sea-based activities, including Maritime

Goal addressed:

- Environmentally friendly sea-based activities

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching objectives for sea-based activities a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Favourable conservation status of biodiversity'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter.

Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients
- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of marine litter
- Loss and disturbance to the seabed
- Disturbance of species
- Extraction and mortality species (e.g. extraction of target species, incidental catches)
- Introduction of non-indigenous species
- Introduction of underwater noise

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Shipping (e.g. transport and transport infrastructure)
- Production and transport of energy (e.g. operational wind farms, transmission cables)
- Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
- Extraction of living resources (e.g. fishing, hunting, marine plant extraction)
- Extraction of non-living resources (e.g. mineral extraction, oil and gas extraction)
- Restructuring of coastline and seabed morphology (e.g. dredging)
- Aquaculture, marine (including infrastructure)

Box 4. Biodiversity

Goal addressed:

- Favourable conservation status of biodiversity

Cross-reference to other segments:

- Biodiversity serves as a holistic controlling element for the performance of the whole Action Plan.
- Achieving the goal of a "Favourable conservation status of the Baltic Sea biodiversity" requires that the goals of all other segments are met.

Pressures addressed:

- Not applicable; human activities and associated pressures are addressed in other segments.

Tentative activities addressed:

- Marine Protected Areas
- Restoration of habitats
- Reintroduction of species
- Conservation and management plans

2) Tentative organization and outline of 'BSAP document'

HOD 55-2018 agreed to include overarching principles and higher level aims from the Helsinki Convention, UN SDGs and other relevant policies in the pre-ambble of the updated BSAP document and supported that climate change will be a key component of the pre-ambble (Document 3.2, Outcome, para 3.12). The pre-ambble will thus address issues that are cross-cutting across policies as well as across segments of the BSAP.

One of the agreements of the HELCOM 2018 Ministerial Declaration is to use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for the updated BSAP. Based on a mapping of goals and targets of different relevant policies, HOD 55-2018 agreed to include reference to sustainable development targets in the narrative of the updated BSAP document (Outcome, para 3.13), for example by clarifying which HELCOM actions will contribute to the implementation of specific SDG targets. SDG targets will thus be addressed where they are best associated but will not govern the outline of the document.

With regard to the outline of each segment of the BSAP, GEAR 20-2018 found it useful to link the state, pressures, activities and actions and supported the proposed use of ecological objectives, management objectives and action areas as a framework for developing the BSAP document. The Meeting furthermore supported that the follow-up of objectives and actions should be clarified as part of the updated BSAP (para 5-28). The framework includes the following elements:

- Ecological objectives which identifies, as currently, the desired state of the environment. They can be followed-up by core indicators and associated threshold values for core indicators representing the status of the environment. Follow-up would be quantitative being based on threshold values for HELCOM core indicators.
- Management objectives are proposed as simple descriptions of the desired change in pressure or conservation status (e.g. reduced input of nutrients, halting the loss of red listed species) as a result of management measures. 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). Follow-up would primarily be quantitative i.e. for Contracting Parties to report on the reduction in relation to the targets.
- Action areas are proposed to be identified for each segment to serve as a frame for different type of actions and measures. Identifying action areas would also provide for a clear link to SDG goals which often refer to specific human activities or drivers (see example on segment on Eutrophication). They can be followed up by evaluating implementation of strategic HELCOM actions. The follow-up is likely most suitable to be based on a qualitative implementation check (accomplished or not) but more specific targets could be developed as relevant. Action areas were preliminary discussed by GEAR 20-2019 and are listed in Annex 2.

How could this translate to a narrative text in the BSAP?

Below is an example on how this could translate into narrative text in the BSAP document for the segment on Eutrophication. It is not intended as a draft text for the updated BSAP but simply provides an example of how the above actions areas and objectives could be presented and how links could be established between polices such as the BSAP and UN SDGs.

Text in *italics* indicates tentative content and comments on ongoing work while roman text indicates example text for the eutrophication segment. Some information, such as list of indicators, is proposed to be included in Annexes rather than in the main text as indicated below.

Eutrophication; input from land-based activities

Introduction: Proposal to include a few paragraphs on current status of eutrophication based on results from State of the Baltic Sea report

Goals and objectives

The overall goal of HELCOM is to have a **Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication** which is characterized by the following **ecological objectives** [*currently under review*]:

- Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels
- Clear water²
- Natural level of algal blooms
- Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals
- Natural oxygen levels

The achievement of ecological objectives is **assessed** every X years by use of HELCOM **status core indicators** on eutrophication as outlined in Annex Y, and as further developed and agreed in HELCOM.

To reach the goal of a Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication the **management objective** is **minimum input of nutrients** from all human activities [*management objectives are currently developed by Working Groups*].

This management objective is operationalized by the HELCOM targets **Maximum Allowable Inputs of nutrients** and **National targets for nitrogen and phosphorus inputs** expressed as nutrient input ceilings for each country by sub-basin [*include targets, e.g. in a table*]

The reduction of nutrient inputs to the sub-basins of the Baltic Sea is **evaluated** every X years by use of the HELCOM core indicator on input of nutrients. Progress towards national targets for input of nutrients is evaluated every X years by use of the HELCOM follow-up system for the nutrient reduction scheme.

Actions to reach the goals and objectives:

*Example formulation of ACTION AREA 1: **We will ensure sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry practices in the Baltic Sea region**, in line with SDG target³ 2.4 ensure by 2030 ‘Resilient agricultural practices that help maintain ecosystems’⁴.*

To this end we ADOPT the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy and AGREE to implement it by XXX.

WE AGREE to implement the following nutrient recycling measures

- XXXX by
- YYYY by

WE DECIDE ...etc. [*list additional actions related to the action area*]

*Example formulation of ACTION AREA 2: **We will ensure improved water quality through an effective waste water treatment.***

WE FIRMLY COMMIT to the full implementation HELCOM Recommendation 28E/5 on municipal wastewater treatment as a matter of urgency

² Note that the review of ecological objectives is ongoing with one view to revise the objective “Clear water” since it cannot be achieved for the Baltic Sea.

³ Reference to Aichi targets and the MSFD could also be added if desired or included in an Annex.

⁴ Full target is: 2.4 by 2030 ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

WE AGREE to Etc. [*list additional actions related to the action area*]

The steps taken to reduce nutrient inputs to the Baltic Sea will jointly contribute to the implementation of SDG 14.1, 'By 2025, Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution' and Annex II and III of the Helsinki Convention. The implementation of agreements will be **followed-up** every X years/in 20XX.

Supporting actions

HELCOM actions that are directly aimed at improving the state of the Baltic Sea, as exemplified above, are proposed to be listed separately from those that are aimed at supporting their implementation. This could be done in association to each segment, or as a separate segment. Such supporting activities and agreements could be related to monitoring, development of indicators and guidelines etc, and more general actions related to the encouragement of activities but that cannot be translated to concrete HELCOM actions e.g. awareness raising, international collaboration, specific research issues.

To support the implementation of actions related to eutrophication

WE AGREE to enhance the monitoring of input of nutrients through:

- XXXX by
- YYYY by
-

WE FURTHERMORE PROMOTE further research on...

- XXX
- YYYY

Annex 1. Provisional activity vs pressure mapping

Mapping of activities vs pressures currently takes place as part of the analyses of sufficiency of measures (SOM) to support the BSAP update. In the SOM analyses the aim is to quantify the activities that are causing major pressures thereby also supporting the identification of type of measures that could be the main focus for new HELCOM actions.

In this document simplified matrices have been used to support the further development of the 'BSAP structure' and 'BSAP document'. These matrices (Annex 1, Tables 1-4) do not take into account all possible activity-pressures linkages but only those that, based on previous HELCOM work (e.g. HOLAS II), can be anticipated to contribute to major impacts on the Baltic Sea ecosystem. The more precise outcome of the SOM analyses in this regard will be available in autumn 2019. Thus, **the list of activities, pressures and tentative actions areas are subject to change**. The activities and pressures adheres in general to the terminology used in the EU [Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Annex III](#).

Cells marked in grey indicates activity-pressure linkages that are likely to be of main concern.

Table A1. Land-based activities vs Pressure according to tentative BSAP segments

BSAP Segment	Eutrophication
	PRESSURE
ACTIVITY- LAND-BASED*	Nutrients
Agriculture	
Forestry	
Aquaculture	
Urban land use (e.g. storm water)	
Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)	

*Land-based transport also contributes but has been excluded from the table with the assumption that have a comparatively limited contribution to the pressure.

Table A2. Land-based activities vs Pressure according to tentative BSAP segments

BSAP Segment	Hazardous substances and litter	
	PRESSURE	
ACTIVITY- LAND-BASED*	Hazardous substances	Litter
Agriculture		
Forestry		
Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)		
Production of energy (fossil fuel, nuclear)		
Urban and industrial uses (oil and gas refineries; industrial plants, construction sites)		
Tourism infrastructure and activities		
Transportation (land – e.g. release from tiers)		

Table A3. Sea-based activities vs Pressure according to tentative BSAP segments

BSAP segment	Eutrophication	Hazardous substances and marine litter		Sea-based activities (mainly Biological and Physical disturbance if expressed in terms of Pressure)				
	PRESSURE							
ACTIVITY SEA-BASED	Nutrients	Hazardous substances	Litter	Loss and disturbance seabed	Disturbance species	Extraction mortality species	Intro NIS	Noise
Shipping								
Extraction of living resources								
Extraction of non-living resources								
Production of energy								
Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities								
Restructuring of seabed morphology								
Aquaculture								

Table A4. Conservation activities vs main ecosystem components addressed in HELCOM assessments

BSAP segment	Favourable conservation status of Baltic biodiversity				
	ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS				
ACTIVITIES - CONSERVATION	Birds	Fish	Mammals	Pelagic habitats	Benthic habitats
Restoration of habitats					
Reintroduction of species					
Marine protected areas					
Conservation and management plans					

Annex 2. Tentative action areas for the respective segment of the BSAP

For use actions areas; see description in section 2 of this document and the example on the segment on Eutrophication. The final list of actions areas would need to consider the HELCOM actions that will finally be included in the updated BSAP, i.e. if there is no action to match an activity it would be omitted from the formulation of action areas.

Eutrophication; input from land-based activities

Tentative action areas:

- Sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry practices
- Effective treatment of waste water
- Well planned urban land use

Hazardous substances and litter; input from land-based activities

Tentative action areas:

- Sustainable agriculture and forestry practices
- Effective treatment of waste water and airborne pollutants
- Effective waste management
- Life cycle management of products
- Responsible tourism

Sea-based activities; including Maritime

Tentative action areas:

- Shipping based on green technology
- Efficient ballast water management
- Effective waste treatment
- Safe of navigation
- Response to maritime accidents
- Environmentally safe offshore installations
- Sustainable fishing practices
- Sustainable practices of activities that cause impacts on the seabed
- Aquaculture practices based on BAT and BEP
- Responsible tourism
- Mitigating emissions of anthropogenic noise
- Ecosystem based Maritime Spatial Planning

Biodiversity segment

Tentative action areas:

- Conservation and protection of ecosystem attributes (including species and habitats, diversity and replication of traits, ecosystem services, genetic variation etc.)
- Restoration of habitats
- Coherent network of MPAs