



Document title	Possible renewal of the HELCOM working structure to support the implementation of the 2021 BSAP
Code	7-1
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	7 - HELCOM institutional and organisational matters
Submission date	16.11.2021
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

Background

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting held on 20 October 2021 adopted the updated [HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) (BSAP) containing almost 200 actions to reach the vision and objectives of the BSAP. To achieve the set objectives, there is a need to consider whether the working structure of HELCOM supports the implementation of the actions in an optimal way.

The previous restructuring of the HELCOM Working Groups took place after the 2013 Ministerial Meeting. HOD 54-2018 agreed that the current working structure should be in place until the completion of the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and may be revisited in 2021 in light of the results of the update process of the BSAP.

This document contains a proposal for the process and timetable for considering the renewal of the HELCOM working structure as well as a proposal on harmonizing the naming of HELCOM groups.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider whether there is a need to renew the HELCOM working structure to support the implementation of the 2021 BSAP;
- agree on the proposed timeline for the possible restructuring; and
- agree on harmonizing the naming of HELCOM groups.

Possible renewal of the HELCOM working structure to support the implementation of the 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan

The previous restructuring of the HELCOM Working Groups took place after the 2013 Ministerial Meeting resulting in the current working structure of five permanent Groups (State and Conservation, Pressure, Maritime, Response and Gear) as well as three time-limited Groups (Agri, Fish and HELCOM-VASAB MSP). HOD 60-2021 approved the prolongation of the mandate of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG until 2030, in line with the timespan of the new Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030. HOD 54-2018 decided to prolong the mandates of the Fish and Agri Groups until 2022, to cover the period of updating the BSAP.

One of the results of the streamlining of HELCOM, concluded in 2014, was a new structure for the work on land-based pollution, monitoring and assessment, as well as biodiversity and nature conservation. HOD 54-2018 considered the feedback from the Pressure and State & Conservation Working Groups on the work of the groups under the revised HELCOM structure. The meeting found it especially relevant to establish closer communication and cooperation between the groups and recognized the high workload of the groups related to the wide spectrum of issues the groups are tasked to deal with. HOD 54-2018 agreed that the current working structure should be in place until the completion of the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and may be revisited in 2021 in light of the results of the update process of the BSAP. The meeting also noted the feedback from the State and Conservation Working Group that nature conservation related issues under the current structure receive too little time and focus and recognized that this issue requires more attention in the future.

Proposed timetable for considering the renewal of the HELCOM working structure

- December 2021:
 - o Initial discussion and guidance on the possible renewal of the HELCOM working structure by HOD 61-2021.
- Spring 2022:
 - o A joint meeting of HELCOM main group Chairs to be organized to discuss the possible restructuring.
 - o Discussion on the possible need for restructuring to take place in the main HELCOM group meetings. Short online meetings can be organized for the groups that have scheduled their next meetings only for autumn 2022. A joint online meeting of State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups to be organized to discuss the restructuring.
- June 2022:
 - o Based on the feedback by the main groups and the meeting of the Chairs, HOD 62-2022 to decide on the possible new HELCOM working structure including the decision on the possible prolongation of the mandate of the time-limited groups.
- Autumn 2022:
 - o Updating the Terms of Reference and Work Plans of the main groups based on the decision by HOD 62-2022 on the possible new structure as well as on the detailed planning of the implementation of the BSAP actions carried out by the main groups in spring 2021 (c.f. [document 2-1](#)).

Naming of the groups

It is proposed that as part of the possible restructuring, attention is paid to harmonizing the naming of the HELCOM groups. Currently, some of the HELCOM subsidiary bodies are called Working Group while others are called Groups. It could be considered whether in the future all main HELCOM groups could be called Working Groups. Also, there is a large variety in naming the sub-groups (expert group, expert network etc.) of the HELCOM main groups and the Secretariat has received many questions on the difference between the

various names of these groups. Harmonizing the names of the groups would make them more easily understandable and also facilitate communicating HELCOM work to the general public. It is proposed that the expert groups be named as follows: "HELCOM Expert Group on xx (EG xx)". The proposed change in naming would be purely editorial and not affect the agreed working mode of the groups.

Sub-groups which are shared with other organization would be excluded from the update in terminology as the naming of these groups is agreed jointly. In addition, it is proposed that the category of Drafting Group (DG) would be retained and be used to describe time limited groups working on drafting specific products. DG mandates would be terminated once the product is finalized.