



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea

HOLAS II 1-2014

Helsinki, Finland, 16-17 December 2014

Document title	Extracts from Meetings of relevance to the HOLAS II project
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Agenda Item	2 - Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to HOLAS II
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Background

This document contains extracts from previous HELCOM meetings and other relevant meetings where the HOLAS II project and the development of a 2nd HELCOM holistic assessment have been discussed.

1. MONAS 19-2013 (19-22 November 2013)
2. GEAR 6-2014 (26-27 March 2014)
3. MONAS 20-2014 (8-10 April 2014)
4. GEAR 7-2014 (16 June 2014)
5. HOD 46-2014 (16-17 September)
6. GEAR 8-2014 (8-10 October 2014)
7. STATE 1-2014 (3-7 November 2014)
8. Conclusions from the 'Meeting with the Member States Parties to HELCOM following the Assessment of the Commission on the MSFD implementation (Article 12 report)'

Special attention should be paid to the most recent HELCOM meetings. Points of specific relevance for the HOLAS II Core Team are highlighted with **bold** text.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the information and use it as appropriate.

1. MONAS 19-2013 (19-22 November 2013)

6.6 The Meeting considered initial proposals for a way forward towards elaborating a second holistic assessment of ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea as presented by Ms. Maria Laamanen, HELCOM Secretariat (Presentation 7). The Meeting agreed that the assessment should be developed so that it can also serve as a regional “roof report” that could be reported by all Baltic Sea EU member states under the MSFD for second cycle initial assessment in 2018.

6.7 The Meeting discussed the need to review and update HELCOM assessment tools and recalled the HELCOM TOOLS workshop held in December 2011. The Meeting felt that the HELCOM TOOLS 1/2011 workshop was very useful and proposed the arranging of a second assessment tool workshop.

6.8 The Meeting discussed how to proceed with the elaboration of a second holistic assessment and stressed that a project should be established to provide a framework and support for the assessment work. A drafting group elaborated a first draft outline of the contents of the assessment, as well as initial ideas for a project proposal for a second holistic assessment (2014-2016). The Meeting discussed and updated the draft outline and project contents as contained in Annex 4. The Meeting mandated the Secretariat to prepare a draft project proposal and to investigate options for funding the project, and requested the Secretariat to forward the draft outline and draft project proposal to HELCOM GEAR 6/2014 for further discussion and elaboration.

6.9 The Meeting agreed on the need to ensure transparency of the development of assessment tools and the tools themselves and that HELCOM should have full ownership of the tools.

2. GEAR 6-2014 (26-27 March 2014)

3.27 The Meeting took note of the draft project description of a second holistic assessment of ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea, as presented by the Secretariat (document 3-5, Presentation 3), and of the proposal to update the HELCOM assessment tools as part of the project, base the assessment on the DPSIR-approach, and include a strengthened component of social and economic analyses compared to the previous holistic assessment in agreement with the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

3.28 The Meeting welcomed the project proposal in general but felt that it is too ambitious and was concerned that it includes aspects not required by the 2018 MSFD reporting.

3.29 The Meeting agreed that the holistic assessment should be based on the DPSIR-approach but with the understanding that A1 (pressure), A2 (state) and A3 (impact on society) would be elaborated in detail while A4 (response/measures) and A5 (appropriateness of measures) should be carried out with less depth and presented as e.g. a discussion chapter.

3.30 The Meeting noted that Denmark and Poland raised study reservations on including A4 and A5.

3.31 The Meeting took note of the comment by ICES reminding the Meeting of a joint group for integrated assessment for the Baltic Sea, to explore links between the project and already ongoing work within the ICES-HELCOM group to avoid possible overlaps.

3.33 The Meeting noted the proposal from Denmark to base the holistic assessment on a combined approach using national indicators as a supplement to the HELCOM core indicators.

3.34 **The Meeting stressed the importance that the core indicators should form the basis for the holistic assessment as a basis for ensuring regional coherence and as agreed in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy.** The Meeting also recognized that while the first set of core indicators have been agreed, the development of new core indicators is still ongoing.

- 3.35 The Meeting agreed to use HELCOM core indicators as a basis for the project and acknowledged the need for continued development of pre-core and candidate indicators.
- 3.36 The Meeting discussed the possibility to postpone the finalization of the holistic report e.g. to mid-2017, with the understanding that substantial work will be ready already by end of 2016 but that some more months will be needed for finalising the final product. Postponing the assessment would also allow for better alignment with the planned assessment in OSPAR.
- 3.37 The Meeting took note of the comment by the EC that if the report was seen as contributing as a significant part of reporting to the 2018 assessment then the timeline could be shifted closer to the MSFD timeline provided it accommodated Member State needs for public consultation.
- 3.38 **The Meeting stressed the intention to use the holistic assessment as roof report for the 2018 MSFD reporting and also to support a strengthened regional coherence and the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.**
- 3.39 The Meeting discussed whether the holistic assessment, if covering the needs of national reporting, could serve the 2018 MSFD reporting needs. The Meeting noted the information from the EC that the Member States should decide the degree to which the roof report will be part of the national reporting requirement. The Meeting proposed to raise the issue at the planned regional meeting with the EC to be held as follow-up to the Article 12 assessment on 14-15 May 2014. The Meeting agreed to come back and discuss the issue at the next GEAR meeting recognizing the need to carefully consider e.g. requirements of public hearing if submitting a joint HELCOM report as the 2018 MSFD reporting.
- 3.40 The Meeting took note of the comment by Sweden wanting to see the assessment structured in a way so that the information can be disaggregated to the national level to enable the use of the information also for other purposes than joint MSFD reporting.
- 3.41 The Meeting discussed the two alternative structures for Project Management presented in the proposal and agreed that the project should be coordinated by a Chair and a core team representing the Contracting Parties. The Meeting also proposed that the Chair and core team could be supported by a project coordinator.
- 3.42 **The Meeting mandated the Secretariat to seek external funding for HOLAS II.**
- 3.43 The Meeting revised the project proposal for HOLAS II based on the comments raised at the meeting as included in document 3-5-Rev.1.

3. MONAS 20-2014 (8-10 April 2014)

- 6.12 The Meeting considered a draft project description for a second holistic assessment (HOLAS II) as contained in document 6-2. The Meeting noted that it is based on a draft submitted by the Secretariat to GEAR 6-2014, which has subsequently been revised taking into account the comments made at GEAR 6-2014.
- 6.13 The Meeting discussed the role of MONAS contacts in the implementation of the HOLAS II project and was of the opinion that in addition to providing a scientific review of the project activities MONAS contacts could also be part of the “HOLAS core team” since the project can be expected to advance quickly.
- 6.14 **The Meeting stressed the importance of deciding on the timeframe of the data to be used in the HOLAS II report and highlighted the need to ensure harmonized availability of data from the same time period from all Contracting Parties.**

6.15 The Meeting took note that the HOLAS II report is intended to be structured in a way that the results can be disaggregated and used for other reporting purposes. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to map the EU data reporting schedules to harmonize the data used in the HOLAS with EU reporting requirements. The schedule should also list deadlines for HELCOM sub-groups and expert groups to submit datasets and data products for the HOLAS II project.

6.16 The Meeting was of the view that GEAR should oversee that EU reporting requirements and HELCOM assessments are aligned and comparable. The Meeting also stressed the importance of ensuring sufficient national involvement in HOLAS II and that HELCOM work should be seen as an integral part of MSFD implementation rather than an additional task on top of the national implementation efforts. The Meeting underlined that better ownership of the HELCOM assessment products would also result in better assessment of regional coherence in the EU evaluation of implementation of MSFD Article 12.

6.17 The Meeting supported cooperation between HELCOM and ICES in production of the holistic assessment and encouraged ICES to present to MONAS potential additional contributions to the HOLAS work and other HELCOM work.

6.18 The Meeting noted that the HOLAS project description will be further updated based on comments submitted by GEAR contacts to the Secretariat no later than 1 May 2014 and invited MONAS contacts to provide their possible comments to their national GEAR contacts.

4. GEAR 7-2014 (16 June 2014)

4.4 **The Meeting agreed in principle to develop a joint roof report through the HELCOM project HOLAS II, and use it as part of the 2018 reporting obligations under MSFD Articles 8, 9 and 10 in 2018.**

4.5 The European Commission welcomed these joint commitments, in particular as regards the proposed use of HOLAS II in the MSFD reporting for 2018, and will actively support this process. However, the European Commission pointed out that any agreement that the EU delegation will give within the context of HELCOM in this respect is without prejudice to the European Commission's role under the EU Treaty to assess the implementation and compliance of EU Member States with EU law and the assessments that the European Commission is required to make in accordance with Articles 12 and 16 MSFD after EU Member States have officially reported to the European Commission.

4.6 **The Meeting welcomed Russia's readiness to participate in the HOLAS II project.** The Meeting took note of the comment by Denmark that the roof report should address all 11 MSFD Descriptors.

4.7 **The Meeting nevertheless stressed that there are a number of issues and practicalities that need to be clarified regarding the development and use of a joint roof report, including how to include the roof-report in public consultations.** Specific issues that were discussed included e.g. the need for translations, how to incorporate the roof report into national assessment reports (in full or by means of jointly agreed summary text elements and reference to the HELCOM website for more detailed information), to consider the possibility of a hearing organized by HELCOM rather than at national level, how to include stakeholders and NGOs in the consultation process, and procedures for handling comments received in national consultations on the roof report. It was emphasised that there was a need for early planning of the next Article 8 MSFD assessment in order to ensure that the assessments at regional level, national and EU level add up and are complementary. This includes the need for a common outline in the EU of the next assessment.

4.8 **The Meeting welcomed the EC's willingness to provide support on the issue of translation.**

5. HOD 46-2014 (16-17 September)

4.20 The Meeting took note of the presentation on the project description of the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) as contained in document 4-11, taking note of:

- the support from the EU to the project, while commenting the need to fine-tune the link between state, pressures, and impacts so that the project fulfills the purpose of serving as a roof report for articles 8, 9, and 10;
- that German experts have provided detailed comments to the project description that will be considered in the further development of the project;
- the comment by Poland concerning how to harmonize the methodology of HELCOM assessment with MSFD reporting demands and the ongoing review of the Commission Decision on Methodological Standards for Good Environmental Status.

4.21 The Meeting noted that HELCOM GEAR has agreed in principle that the Second Holistic Assessment should be developed so that it can be used by the Contracting Parties also being EU Member States as a joint roof report for the 2018 reporting obligations under MSFD Articles 8, 9, and 10, thus there is a common understanding among the EU Member States on this matter, and recognized that this will require some flexibility in the project implementation to accommodate for possible changes in EC guidelines for reporting and methodological standards.

4.22 **The Meeting agreed in principle on the project HOLAS II as contained in document 4-11 recognizing that some components need further development. The Meeting invited the upcoming Core Team of the project to further elaborate on the project details and description, and develop a roadmap for carrying out the project as soon as possible to be reported to GEAR and HODs.**

4.23 The Meeting requested the Contracting Parties to nominate their representatives to the HELCOM Core Team by informing Professional Secretary Ulla Li Zweifel (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) by 30 September 2014.

4.24 **The Meeting noted that the Secretariat has applied to the Nordic Council of Ministers for funding for HOLAS II**, which if granted, will still be insufficient to secure the whole of the needed financing. Outcome of HOD 46-2014

4.25 The Meeting discussed additional funding opportunities for carrying out the project, invited the Contracting Parties to contribute to the budget of the project, and welcomed the offer from Sweden to finance the Project Coordinator of HOLAS II as outlined in the tentative budget, i.e. a 50% post.

4.26 **The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to consider taking the lead on specific components of social and economic analysis as outlined in the project description.**

4.29 **The Meeting took note of the information by the EU that a Call to support the MSFD implementation has been launched with the title "Best practices for action plans to develop integrated, regional monitoring programmes, coordinated programmes of measures and addressing data and knowledge gaps in coastal and marine waters".**

4.30 **The Meeting tasked the Secretariat to start developing a proposal for an application to this call based on gaps and knowledge needs identified in HELCOM and to support the work by GEAR.**

6. GEAR 8-2014 (8-10 October 2014)

3.7 The Meeting discussed the purpose of the joint report on PoMs and reiterated that a "roof report" is referring to a joint product that is directly used as a main element of reporting.

3.30 The Meeting took note of on the upcoming EU call on “Best practices for action plans to develop integrated, regional monitoring programmes, coordinated programmes of measures and addressing data and knowledge gaps in coastal and marine waters” and recalled that HOD 46-2014 tasked the Secretariat to start developing a proposal for an application to this call based on gaps and knowledge needs identified in HELCOM and to support the work of GEAR. The Meeting took note the possible topics of the call being HOLAS II, including data arrangements for core indicators and assessment tools, activities on seafloor integrity, underwater noise, monitoring guidelines, and supported these topics as in need of further work and resources for the implementation.

7. STATE 1-2014 (3-7 November 2014)

Agenda Item 5J Thematic session 3: Biodiversity assessment tools

5.1 The Meeting took note of the description of the BEAT biodiversity assessment tool as presented by Mr. Jesper H. Andersen, NIVA Denmark Water Research (Presentation 12, document 5J-2). The Meeting noted the linkages between BEAT and assessment tools developed in the EU DEVOTES project.

5.2 The Meeting took note of work carried out in the Life+ funded MARMONI project related to development of indicators and assessment of biodiversity status, as presented by Mr. Georg Martin, Estonian Marine Institute (Presentation 13, document 5J-1).

5.3 The Meeting discussed the strengths and limitations of the presented tools as well as how to proceed with the development of a biodiversity assessment within the HOLAS II project. **The Meeting was of the view that the HOLAS II project should make use of the best components of existing biodiversity assessment tools in the further development of the assessment tool while also considering what is available elsewhere.**

5.4 The Meeting pointed out that the new holistic assessment should as far as possible evaluate whether there has been a change in status since the previous assessment.

5.5 **The Meeting acknowledged that the quality of the results of the HOLAS II assessment is dependent on the quality of the data and indicators used. The Meeting therefore emphasized the need to continue the development of core indicators and to involve experts from the CORESET II project also in HOLAS II.**

5.6 The Meeting acknowledged that new indicators will also be developed after the CORESET II project and that the assessment tool should therefore be developed to be versatile enough to incorporate also new indicators in the future.

5.7 The Meeting stressed the importance of ensuring compatibility with EU reporting and assessment requirements and the need to take into account the results of the on-going revision of the Commission Decision on criteria and methodological standards on good environmental status (GES) and the development of other relevant MSFD CIS guiding documents. The Meeting welcomed the information that the HELCOM Secretariat has been participating in the relevant EC meetings as well as the interest of the EC to take into account the work on-going in Regional Seas Conventions.

5.8 **The Meeting noted that to make use of the HOLAS II assessment results for the MSFD 2018 reporting, the assessment should also allow for assessing status based on the MSFD descriptors and take into account the DPSIR approach to allow for linking the status assessment with programmes of measures.**

5.9 The Meeting pointed out that it would be important to present the assessment results at different levels of detail so that they can be used by decision-makers and the public, but also by experts.

Agenda Item 4MA Assessments

4.1 HOLAS II project description adopted by HOD 46-2014 as contained in document 4MA-3 and the information on the selection of a Chair and Project Coordinator for the project (cf. paragraph 2.5 under Agenda Item 2J).

4.2 **The Meeting discussed the assessment period for the upcoming HOLAS II project**, taking into account that a draft report should be ready by mid-2017 to cater for national consultations while a final report should be prepared by mid-2018 (Presentation 20). The Meeting noted the concern raised by Germany that the deadline for the pre-draft by mid-2017 may be too late and that the MSFD reporting schedule should be checked nationally. The Meeting also noted the proposal by DG ENV to possibly update the assessment with data that becomes available during the public consultation period.

4.3 The Meeting recalled that the 1st holistic assessment was based on data from 2003-2007 and was of the opinion that a continuous use of data is desirable i.e. **that the 2nd holistic assessment should use data from 2008 while the assessment period (e.g. data used in the assessment tool) could be from 2011 onwards.**

4.4 **The Meeting discussed the last year of the assessment period and felt that it was too early to have a specific proposal but stressed that as recent data as possible should be used, preferably including data from 2016. The Meeting also pointed out that such recent data is also necessary since the monitoring of some parameters will only start in 2014-2016 (e.g. underwater noise and litter).**

4.5 **The Meeting also noted that in 2016 the data on airborne and waterborne inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances will only be available up to 2014 since 2015 data will not be available in the autumn of 2017.**

4.6 The Meeting noted the opinion of Latvia that HELCOM core indicators will not be sufficient as a basis for the planned thematic and holistic assessments. The Meeting stressed that while core indicators form the basis for the assessment as agreed in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, supporting information e.g. trends and BSEFS, will provide important information for interpreting the results from the indicator-based assessment tools.

8. Conclusions from the 'Meeting with the Member States Parties to HELCOM following the Assessment of the Commission on the MSFD implementation (Article 12 report'

As a follow up of the European Commission Article 12 assessment, a 'Meeting with the Member States Parties to HELCOM following the Assessment of the Commission on the MSFD implementation (Article 12 report)' was held in Brussels, 14-15 May 2014. As an outcome of the Meeting, Contracting Parties also being EU Member States made a number of commitments, including to:

- Further develop together and revise their definition of GES on the basis of relevant EU legislation and the agreed core and, where possible pre-core, indicators, of HELCOM and consequently using them at national level as soon as possible and in 2018 at the latest.
- Improve the adequacy, completeness and coherence of the initial assessment in the Baltic Sea by developing the next HELCOM Holistic Assessment (HOLAS2) as an integral part of the initial assessment of all Member States ("roof report") and include a draft HOLAS2 report in the national public consultation and the final HOLAS2 report in the report for the initial assessment to the Commission. HOLAS2 will be based on the agreed core and pre core indicators and the coordinated GES mentioned above.
- Reflect further on the timing of the HOLAS2 report where a draft report would be agreed by mid-2017, then used for public consultation and finalised and adopted by HELCOM, reflecting the feedback from the public consultations and possibly with some updated information that became

available in the meantime, in mid-2018, in time for inclusion in the national reports to the Commission in October 2018.

- Consider the public information and consultation timelines in the further planning and ensure that the regional work is developed in such a way that, at all stages of the MSFD implementation, it can be considered in the national public consultations. In addition, a regional public consultation through HELCOM was discussed as a possible option to explore. In particular the updates of GES and targets and the HOLAS2 will have to be considered for public consultation in the period between mid-2017 and mid-2018.

Furthermore, the Commission committed itself to:

- Improve the electronic reporting system to make it more user-friendly and reduce administrative burden. In particular, the Commission will work with HELCOM to allow the HOLAS2 report to become the main part of the report of the Baltic Member States to the Commission in 2018. The practical details will be worked out between the Commission and the Member States through WG DIKE by the end of 2015 with the aim of agreeing an approach applicable to all marine regions.