



OUTCOME OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA (HOLAS II 1-2014)

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OUTCOME OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA (HOLAS II 1-2014)

Introduction

- 0.1 The First Meeting of the Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II 1-2014) was held in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of the Finnish Meteorological Institute on 16-17 December 2014.
- 0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and the European Commission. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.
- 0.3 The Meeting elected Ms. Maria Laamanen, Finland, as Chair for the HOLAS II project.
- 0.4 Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel, Professional Secretary at HELCOM, acted as secretary of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

Documents: 1-1

- 1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in document 1-1.

Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to HOLAS II

Documents: 2-1, 2-2, 2-3

- 2.1 The Meeting took note of the presentation of the HOLAS II project description (document 2-2, **Presentation 1**) as presented by Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel.
- 2.2 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Maria Laamanen on the outcome of the Regional Meeting of the EU Member States Parties to HELCOM following the Assessment of the Commission on the MSFD implementation (Article 12 report) highlighting that Contracting Parties also being EU Member States agreed to use the HELCOM holistic assessment produced through the HOLAS II project as a joint roof report for the reporting of the MSFD in 2018, and to base the report on core indicators (**Presentation 2**).
- 2.3 The Meeting took note of the view of the European Commission that the feedback from national consultations on the draft roof report should be considered in the finalization of the report. The Meeting further took note of the following information from the European Commission:
- a new report has been published on the development of a shared data and information system between the EU and RSCs (Deltares),
 - reporting requirements for MSFD Programmes of Measures were agreed at the last Marine Directors meeting,
 - a workshop will be held in Copenhagen in January 2015 to discuss cross-cutting issues in the review of the Commission decision 2010/477/EU and the review of MSFD Annex III.

Agenda Item 3 Activities and projects to feed into HOLAS II

Documents: 3-1, 3-2, 3-3

- 3.1 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Lena Avellan (**Presentation 3**), Project Manager of CORESET II, on the development of HELCOM core indicators. The indicators developed in the project will be made available for review by Contracting Parties from March 2015.
- 3.2 The Meeting noted the comment from Estonia pointing out the disproportion of indicators between different organism groups as presented in document 3-1, e.g. the lack of indicators on benthic species and communities. The Meeting further noted the information that the Life+ project MARMONI has developed 40+ operational indicators that are mostly not part of the HELCOM core set of indicators.
- 3.3 The Meeting noted the view of some Contracting Parties that also national indicators should be considered in the holistic assessment to complement the HELCOM core indicators. The Meeting took note of the proposal from Finland to base the HELCOM holistic assessment on core indicators while possibly using additional indicators in the national reporting. The Meeting also noted the possibility to agree on and use supplementary HELCOM indicators, i.e. indicators that are agreed as common for assessments of specific sub-basins.
- 3.4 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen (**Presentation 4**), Project Manager EUTRO-OPER, noting that the project will work on an approach on how to measure and visualize distance to GES which can be of interest of use also for other assessment products. The project will also test the application of the HEAT tool in coastal areas and furthermore develop a process to improve that data flow for eutrophication assessments.
- 3.5 The Meeting welcomed the testing of the HEAT tool in coastal waters by EUTRO-OPER since the difference in indicators and assessment approaches between the coastal areas according to the WFD and offshore areas according to HELCOM assessment tools is point of concern for several Contracting Parties also being EU Member States.
- 3.6 The Meeting took note that the methodology of the HELCOM eutrophication assessment is an issue to be discussed in the further development of assessment tools and furthermore that the ongoing review and development of the MSFD CIS may provide guidance on this issue.
- 3.7 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Mr. Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, Professional Secretary, (**Presentation 5**) on the HELCOM core pressure indicator on nutrients inputs which aims to follow-up on progress towards the maximum allowable inputs (MAI) of the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme, noting that this is so far the only agreed HELCOM core indicator on pressures. The Meeting pointed out that it would be useful to also display national achievement of CART in the same figure.
- 3.8 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Mr. Hermann Backer (**Presentation 6**) on the work of the MARTIME WG and the production of a HELCOM thematic assessment on Maritime activities by 2016 including activities of relevance for HOLAS II, e.g. data ship movements, ship accidents, ship emissions, alien species in ports, and bathymetric data. The Meeting took note that data on maritime activities can in general be made available with one year delay. If the planned improvement of processing of shipping data is realized even more recent data can likely be made available for HOLAS II.
- 3.9 The Meeting further noted the ongoing work to develop a pressure core indicator on 'Oil-spills affecting the marine environment' based on the HELCOM surveillance of oils spills.
- 3.10 The Meeting discussed the national expectations on the HOLAS II project and noted that for all Contracting Parties also being EU Member States it is an important requirement that the HELCOM second holistic assessment should support the 2018 MSFD reporting requirements. The Meeting agreed in general to the proposed time-table for the project, highlighting the need to map more closely when the draft roof report has to be ready at the latest to serve the national consultation process and to adjust the time-table accordingly if needed.
- 3.11 The Meeting took note that Denmark, Germany and Sweden aim at having only one assessment of the Kattegat area which should be carried out for the 2018 MSFD reporting. The Meeting proposed that this

issue should be discussed trilaterally between the concerned countries in communication with both OSPAR and HELCOM with the aim of presenting a proposed solution at the next meeting of HOLAS II.

3.12 The Meeting took note of the following additional information on national processes for the MSFD 2018 reporting

- Denmark; presenting the expectations on the HOLAS II project (**Presentation 7**), including a number of issues that Denmark would like to see achieved, e.g. a good correlation with national monitoring, good regional coordination, good fit to the OSPAR intermediate assessment, strong link to national targets (referring to both status and pressures). Furthermore, the assessment should provide the environmental status of the 11 descriptors, preferentially as differentiated in the reporting of monitoring programmes, as well as an overall integrated assessment of the status of ecosystem, measures to achieve GES, and cost-effectiveness of measures. Funding is available for participation of national experts to HOLAS II during 2015.
- Germany; expressing the opinion that the development of the HELCOM assessment tool for eutrophication is considered as appropriate, while the development of the assessment tool for hazardous substances would benefit from considering the work done in OSPAR, agreeing with Denmark that the assessment should be carried out according to the MSFD descriptors as well as aggregation of status indicators to assess state of the ecosystem. Furthermore, the social and economic analysis and measures should be given less priority in the holistic assessment, in accordance to previous comments made to the HOLAS project description (document 2-2) and expressing concern about the timing of the development of indicators and that further resources are needed to finalize the work carried out in the CORESET II project.
- Sweden; wishing to see a harmonization between the work carried out in OSPAR and HELCOM in regard of supporting the 2018 MSFD reporting, informing that a national coordination has started to secure support to HOLAS II.
- Finland; stressing the need for the time-table to consider the national consultations and that the report needs to be agreed at HELCOM meeting in 2018 at the latest to accommodate the national approval process, supporting that the project should have ambitious goals, proposing to use the HOLAS II project to consider the development of common principles for updating of environmental targets.
- Estonia; expressing that the results of the holistic assessment should be comparable to those of the WFD in coastal waters, to use as much national and bilateral information as possible, supporting the view of Finland to strive for regional coordination in the development of environmental targets, and stressing the need to develop pressure indicators to follow up the targets.
- Poland: that it would be difficult to have a complete section on measures considering the few core pressure indicators.

3.13 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Lydia Martin-Roumegas (**Presentation 8**), European Commission, including the future perspective of the MSFD and the expectation that the evaluation according to article 20 in 2019, including the review of the status of the marine environment, will be based on roof reports from of RSCs and on improved assessments and increased regional coherence (e.g. using common indicators). The Meeting also took note of the information on work towards marine information schema (MIS) for Europe, a holistic information model that will build on data and information from MSs and RSCs. The development of MIS is only at its first phase and it is an ongoing process.

Agenda Item 4 **Development of a roadmap for developing the second HELCOM holistic assessment**

Documents: 4-1, 4-2, 4-3

4.1 The Meeting discussed the format of the final products and agreed that an electronic version of the report is an evident format and that this should not simply be a pdf but a more elaborate web-based product. The Meeting also agreed that a printed paper copy of the report would be valuable and this product should aim at being an extract of the information included in the web-based product and that it could be constructed with the needs for translation to national languages in mind. Further, it should be relatively slim and support communication purposes while the web-based version could be more voluminous and detailed.

4.2 The Meeting discussed the outline of the holistic assessment and agreed on the outline as contained in **Annex 2**, noting that it may need further elaboration to reflect continued developments of the HOLAS II project and its activities as well as developments in the MSFD CIS process. The Meeting further noted that OSPAR is developing an outline for their planned interim report.

4.3 The Meeting proposed that environmental targets should be specifically addressed in the holistic report, tentatively as linked to section on Measures towards reaching GES. The Meeting proposed the GEAR group to give advice on how to address environmental targets for pressures in the holistic report and potentially provide input through its own work towards increased regional coherence of targets.

4.4 The Meeting welcomed the offer from Finland to take the lead role in the development of the social and economic component of the 2nd holistic assessment and encouraged other Contracting Parties to take an active part in the work. The Meeting took note of the concern raised by some countries that the methods to evaluate social and economic aspects are still under development. The Meeting concluded that development through the HELCOM 2nd holistic assessment can be a driver for improving methods and approaches to assess social and economic aspects and to advance this topic in HELCOM and elsewhere. The development of this section of the report should be discussed at an upcoming meeting. Literature on economic and social analysis is available from the work carried about by the MSFD CIS WG ESA.

4.5 The Meeting agreed that the assessment should be carried out descriptor-wise and information on each descriptor should be presented separately. The Meeting discussed in particular how to assess biodiversity and proposed that descriptors 1, 4 and 6 should be assessed together to provide an overall assessment of biodiversity but in such a way that an assessment for the respective descriptor would be distinguishable and that descriptor 1 could be further separated in assessment of biological elements such as birds, fish, etc. as differentiated in monitoring programmes under Article 11.

4.6 The Meeting discussed the production of the thematic assessment reports on biodiversity, eutrophication and hazardous substances as have been agreed in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, and proposed that the descriptor-wise assessments included in the holistic assessment could also be considered as separate HELCOM building blocks and published as self-standing products.

4.7 The Meeting discussed the assessment of descriptor 3, and noted that ICES will provide an assessment of this descriptor. The Meeting noted that HELCOM core indicators cover the status of fish communities (through core indicators 'Proportion of large fish in the community' and 'Mean maximum length (MML) of the fish community') and therefore also reflect the status of commercial stock assessment. The Meeting agreed to communicate with ICES to assure that the assessment under D3, D1 and D4; together reflect the status of fish communities and that the relevant indicators are included in the biodiversity assessment.

4.8 The Meeting discussed the application of a holistic integrated assessment of the status of the Baltic Sea environment (ecosystem health), concluded that such assessment should be conducted but that the principles for such assessment should be readdressed through a specific session at the next meeting of the HOLAS II project.

4.9 The Meeting discussed the assessment period for the 2nd holistic assessment and recalled the proposal from STATE 1-2014 to use a 6-year assessment period from the years 2011-2016 and found it appropriate to aim for this period, with the understanding that data from all years will not necessarily be

available. The Meeting noted the concern of the gap between the 1st and 2nd holistic assessment and proposed to cover the gap by assessing trends, using as long data series as possible. A longer assessment period was not considered appropriate and starting earlier than 2011 would mean double reporting for several Contracting Parties also being EU Member States that used data later than 2007 in the reporting of the initial MSFD assessment.

4.10 The Meeting discussed how to develop a roadmap for carrying out the project and started drafting a roadmap according to [Working Paper 1](#). The Meeting agreed that the roadmap should reflect the draft outline of the holistic assessment and the plan to assess each of the thematic building blocks (descriptors) and decided to further develop the roadmap at the next meeting. Comments to the draft roadmap should be submitted to the Secretariat (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) **by 31 January 2015**.

4.11 The Meeting agreed that the development of an assessment tool for hazardous substances should also aim to cover descriptor 9 and for this purpose Contracting Parties should involve their national experts working on aspects of contaminants in seafood.

4.12 The Meeting discussed the development of the biodiversity assessment tool and noted that the development of the tool will tentatively be carried out as part of the HELCOM project BOOST (Baltic Sea project to boost regional coherence of marine strategies through improved data flow, assessments, and knowledge base for development of measures) for which funds have been applied for from DG ENVIRONMENT. A response to the application is expected in early 2015. The Meeting noted that the development of assessment tools will be based on workshops with participation of Contracting Parties' experts to develop and guide the development of the tools. The Meeting noted that the BOOST project, if granted funding, will not include activities for carrying out the biodiversity assessment and that this has to be further planned and detailed by the HOLAS Core team.

Agenda item 5 Any other business

5.1 The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting, 17-18 March 2015 focusing on:

- Status of core indicators and proposals for supplementary indicators to be used in HOLAS II
- Developing terms of reference for the planned workshops to develop assessment tools
- Further develop the roadmap for carrying the project
- Denmark, Germany and Sweden to present outcome of trilateral discussions regarding the assessment of the Kattegat
- Follow-up on the EU MSFD CIS related to Annex III and the Commission Decision
- Discuss scales and assessment units

Agenda item 6 Outcome of the Meeting

Documents: 6-1

6.1 The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting as contained in document 6-1.

Annex 1. List of Participants

Representing	Name	Organization	E-mail address
Chair			
Chair	Maria Laamanen	Ministry of Environment	maria.laamanen@ymparisto.fi
Contracting Parties			
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Secretariat	Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen	HELCOM Secretariat	vivi.fleming-lehtinen@helcom.fi

Annex 2. Preliminary draft outline of the 2nd Holistic Assessment of Baltic Sea ecosystem health

Executive Summary

Introduction

- Policy background (BSAP, MSFD, WFD, BD, HD, MSP/ICZM, CFP, CAP, highlighting the ecosystem approach) and international cooperation (IMO, CBD)
 - Previous assessments and new developments of tools
 - Methodology [short version in printed report, longer version in the web-version]
- 1. Assessment of pressures and human activities acting on the environment**
 - Spatial distribution and trends of individual human activities and pressures, e.g. with pressure core indicators
 - Cumulative assessment of pressures using the BSPI/BSII, including new pressure data layers
 - Climate change – summary based on thematic assessment and new info, e.g. EMEP
 - 2. Assessment of the state and distance to GES**
 - Core indicator –based assessments, using tools for integration
 - assessment by MSFD descriptors/thematic building blocks.
 - biodiversity; including descriptors 1, 4, 6, assessed separately and together. Descriptor 1 also to present separately the assessment of elements, differentiated as in monitoring programmes under Article 11.
 - assessment of status of the ecosystem health (across descriptors)
 - Selection of trends in key parameters
 - Supporting parameters to interpret result of the assessment tools (e.g. change in climatic factors between assessment periods).
 - 3. and economic aspects [consider title – more communicative]**
 - Cost-of degradation of the environment, benefits of mitigating environmental problems
 - 4. Measures towards reaching GES**
 - Environmental targets [location to be further discussed]
 - Existing and planned measures (based on work of IG PoM and reporting for MSFD Article 13)
 - Analysis sufficiency of measures to reach GES
 - Propose (if needed) additional regional actions and measures to reach GES

Conclusions and future outlook