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### Background

In preparation for the Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop a list of questions was sent out to relevant HELCOM Expert and Working Groups. The document below considers two components of marine mammals, the latest information on the Harbour porpoise indicator, as presented at the recent meeting of HELCOM EG MAMA, and responses from the HELCOM mammal health team (a team within the HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals, EG MAMA) related to mammal health indicators and the developments needed to carry out an improved assessment.

### Action requested

The Workshop is invited to take note of this information and use it as required during the discussion.

## Harbour porpoise

The recent developments regarding the [HELCOM Harbour porpoise indicator were presented](#) at EG MAMA 13-2019, with a number of clear next steps in the required work being identified:

- Definition of Reference Levels
- Definition of key sites
- Identify strategic key sites for distributional monitoring
- Simulation study
- Continue working on the indicator document
- Develop monitoring guidelines for harmonised key site monitoring, based on information from national monitoring programmes

Division of the information into 3 major components was envisaged: Absolute abundance, Trends in abundance and Distribution.

A [first draft of the indicator report](#) was also provided to the meeting.

It was also noted that resources to carry out the simulation study would be needed and that the simulation study would develop an understanding of aspects such as:

- When can we detect a trend in absolute abundance based on SAMBAH surveys only, and if we increase the survey frequency?
- What is the optimal design for key site monitoring?
- What is the suitable time unit for detecting trends in key site monitoring?
- When can we detect trends in key site densities?
  - In core key sites: trend in population abundance
  - In strategic key sites: change in distribution pattern

## Marine mammal health indicators

As input prior to the second workshop HELCOM Experts are invited to: [Review the relevant Topic Summary and revised aims section](#)

We have commented and provided text updates in marked changes in document “Comments to topic summary of marine mammals...”.

These comments have been incorporated into the updated version of the topic summary for mammals.

[Review the HELCOM indicator-policy match \(particularly for the BSAP and MSFD\)](#)

Nutritional and reproductive status seems to be correct

[Evaluate if existing/developing HELCOM indicators correctly meet the requirements of the COMMISSION DECISION \(EU\) 2017/848.](#)

D1C3 (secondary criteria for seals) “Member States shall establish threshold values for specified characteristics of each species through regional or subregional cooperation, taking account of adverse effects on their health derived from D8C2, D8C4 and other relevant pressures.”

Threshold values are set for nutritional status and reproductive status for increasing populations, but not at carrying capacity. This needs to be set and agreed upon.

Address the priority areas identified at HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 (see information provided separately).

For reproductive status and blubber thickness, the work during 2020 includes gathering all available data from all countries, verifying the quality of data and identifying gaps, as well as calculating the needed resources and securing veterinarian and statistical expertise for data analyses. Extensive work by a statistician (mainly for blubber thickness).

Provide a clear indication of the resource requirements to implement the work.

For blubber thickness, a bio-statistician or a similar qualified person for 12 months full time to produce a user friendly software where data can be entered (date, sex, area etc.) and that can calculate trends would be required. It is necessary that this project is conducted in close cooperation with lead/co-leads and the Marine Mammal Health Team as in addition to the blubber thickness extensive metadata on the health status, age, sex, reproductive status etc. of marine mammals is needed.

The amount of data as well as the mentioned metadata is very important. Therefore national needs for funding to contribute with data is also highly relevant. Unfortunately, in several countries funding to collect marine mammals data, and the relevant supporting data from the animals, is not available. A detailed financial concept to fill these gaps is needed!

Denmark needs a dedicated multi-year project with one or more persons to build a stranding network and a database, and to increase the number of necropsied animals per year to be able to deliver data.

Note the agreed deadlines for indicator development (adjustment by autumn 2020 and development by autumn 2021).

The deadlines may be too short due to data gaps, as gathering data is time consuming. The extent of the data gaps is currently not easy to overview. To include data from all countries, there is a lot of statistical work to be done (see question V). To calculate blubber thickness status as done previously (e.g. on only Swedish and Finnish data) is possible.

National funding available for filling the data gaps (different in different areas) is needed. Next step: develop a plan to fill those gaps.

Evaluate appropriate approaches for carrying out integrated assessments and identify where clear interlinkages between different indicators (or BSAP segments) occur (e.g. linkage between eutrophication and bird status).

Pelagic habitats and food webs

Commercial fish

Contaminants, marine debris, noise

Seal abundance

Health indicator in marine mammals