

Terms of Reference for Second HELCOM indicator workshop

The second HELCOM indicator workshop (HELCOM Indicator WS 2-2019) is planned to take place on 16-18 October, 2019, provisionally in Helsinki (TBC). The workshop will start at 09.00 on 16 October and end at 15.00 on 18 October.

Background

The HELCOM indicators have a solid scientific grounding and directly address relevant aspects in the ecosystem, determining status and progress towards good status via threshold values. The HELCOM indicators are designed and developed to suitably assess the status of the Baltic Sea with respect to the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), for those Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States. Coordination with the EU MSFD CIS (Common implementation Strategy) and relevant technical groups (e.g. TG Marine Litter, TG Noise and TG Seabed) is therefore important. Furthermore, where relevant and possible, crosscutting issues should be explored, such as how the assessment of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Habitats Directive (HD) and the Birds Directive (BD) can function appropriately with HELCOM indicators. Moreover, this approach, combined with relevant cooperation (e.g. OSPAR or ICES) will ensure a good use of resources and the development of a comparable and high-quality assessment in the future.

Although relevant to HELCOM processes, the specific application of HELCOM indicators to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not currently directly considered, and further guidance from relevant HELCOM groups (e.g. HOD) will be needed to be able to define the goal and work with respect to linking HELCOM indicators to the SDGs.

To facilitate the future development and prioritization of HELCOM indicators a number of processes have been initiated within HELCOM that provide guiding principles and plans for the work ahead. Firstly, the work plan for 'Future work on HELCOM indicators', setting out a five step approach, was approved at HELCOM HOD 54-2018 ([Outcomes paragraph 4.25](#), and [document 4-5](#)) and guiding principles for this work were agreed on by HELCOM GEAR ([GEAR document 5-4](#), see page 6), in particular the need to ensure HELCOM indicators function for the MSFD GES Decision (2017/848/EC) criteria and methodological standards, for those HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States.

The first HELCOM indicator workshop (HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019), held in Berlin on 14-15 May 2019, considered four major topics: priority topics for future work, pertinent information to form an indicator management document, appropriate information to provide to HOD 56-2019 (i.e. an update on progress and a plan forward), and the content and approach for a second indicator workshop in autumn 2019.

Purpose

The purpose of the second indicator workshop is to:

- Establish proposals for the short- and long-term development/adjustment work on HELCOM indicators, based on the outcomes of the HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 and any subsequent guidance from HELCOM Working Groups and HODs.
- Define the plan toward the HOLAS III assessment (short-term) – indicators and related overall holistic integrated assessment of the Baltic Sea.
- Establish proposals for a clearly defined HELCOM indicator system capable of supporting the objectives of the updated BSAP and the policy requirements outlined above.

- To engage in a final discussion on priorities within topics and between topics at policy level at the end of the workshop, taking into account the input provided by the technical experts at the workshop.

Aims

The workshop will follow a clear working mode, as defined by earlier processes and decisions (see background, above). The workshop will primarily focus on consolidation aspects (i.e. existing indicators and indicators currently under development) to ensure existing work is rationalized and fits to the defined purpose outlined above. A clear path ahead will be defined, with identified major gaps (e.g. in HOLAS II or to MSFD primary criteria) being a subsequent focus. The following specific outcomes are expected from this workshop:

1. Clarity on the ambition level regarding indicator work for the third holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III), guided by subsequent discussion at HELCOM Working Groups and HODs.
2. Clarity on how indicators will be used in HOLAS III (e.g. use of individual indicators in relation to specific themes, linkages of indicators across themes, integrated assessments, comparability/compatibility of indicator assessments (threshold values) across themes, and pressure-state linkages).
3. Common understanding throughout HELCOM structure regarding policy requirements for future work on HELCOM indicators.
1. Clarity on existing work of relevance for HOLAS III done by collaborators (e.g. EU and OSPAR).
2. Listing of all indicators to be utilized in the HOLAS III assessment and for which adjustment/development work must take place, including:
 - a. an estimation of resource (e.g. time) required for the work, with the aim to facilitate appropriate resource allocation and planning (e.g. national, lead and co-lead country, project, Secretariat).
 - b. a clear and detailed timeline, including milestones, for the indicator adjustment/development work to be carried out, in line with existing deadlines: short-term (autumn 2020), medium-term (autumn 2021), and long term (post-HOLAS III).
3. Proposal for organizing the implementation of the indicator development.
4. A follow up system, in line with the planned HELCOM Indicator Management Manual, to ensure indicator adjustment/development work is on track.

The starting point for technical discussion at the second workshop will be the preliminary priority areas/topics identified at the HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 (see details in Annex 1). This will be carried out in thematic sections based on three relevant BSAP Segments: Biodiversity, Hazardous Substances (Pollution, including litter and noise) and Eutrophication. As supporting documentation and for preparation of the second indicator workshop a list of questions and requests for preparatory work will be sent out to relevant indicator leads/co-leads, expert groups and Working Groups.

Preparatory work

To support discussion and good progress at the workshop the following preparatory work will be carried out prior to the workshop:

1. Updated topic summaries post HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 (Secretariat via Core Group – early June).

2. The preliminary priority evaluation (updated indicator matching spreadsheet) post HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 (Secretariat via Core Group – early June).
3. A cover document for the above two items, including a detailed list of requests identified at HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019 (listed below), to be sent to relevant expert groups and indicator leads/co-leads. This information request will also be sent to the relevant HELCOM Working Groups (e.g. GEAR, PRESSURE and State and Conservation) so that national positions on the identified issues can be brought to the second HELCOM indicator workshop. This document will also request that solutions to the identified issues are prepared in advance of the second workshop to facilitate discussion on potential ways to develop the work further. The document will also provide guidance to the experts contacted on how to consider the requests for solutions (Secretariat and Core Group – early June).

The HELCOM Indicator Core Group will meet on 11 June 2019 to discuss and finalize the above three items. These documents, and relevant supporting information, will be submitted to the identified experts/leads/co-leads in mid-August at the latest.

4. A discussion paper on how to utilize HELCOM indicators in HOLAS III as a framing for the aims of the workshop (Germany and Core Group – mid-August).

The HELCOM Indicator Core Group will meet in late August to discuss and finalize the discussion paper above.

5. The updated version of the GES follow up document (DG GES - Follow up work to Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848) will also be provided prior to the second workshop to relevant experts/leads/co-leads to support planning and cooperative work (Germany and Core Group – end September).
6. Proposal for organization and implementation of HELCOM indicator system (Secretariat supported by Sweden, via Core Group – mid-August).
7. Decisions taken at GEAR and HOD related to HOLAS III may also be relevant for framing the discussion at the workshop (TBC).

NOTE: A full list of topics/areas and points for discussion at the second workshop are detailed in Annex 1, below.

Organization

Organization of the second HELCOM indicator workshop will be supported by a continuation of the HELCOM indicator core group. Via this group, and incorporating any comments received from HOD 56-2019, the final structure of the workshop will be established. This HELCOM indicator core group will work closely with the Secretariat to draft documents and develop further planning of the second HELCOM indicator workshop (HELCOM Indicator WS 2-2019). A list of participants in the HELCOM indicator core group is provided in Annex 2.

A preliminary structure and timetable for the workshop is provided below:

Provisional timetable and structure

Day 1			Day 2			Day 3
General introduction			Biodiversity	Eutrophication	Pollution	Biodiversity-Pollution linkages
Ambition level for HOLAS III						
Use of indicators in HOLAS III – including across-theme, pressure-state and overall assessment aims			Biodiversity-Eutrophication linkages			Policy steer and conclusions
Summary - Common understanding						
Biodiversity	Eutrophication	Pollution				

Sections of the provisional timetable above are coloured blue where common overviews are discussed, and green where expert discussion (co-Chaired by policy and technical experts) will be the focus.

The structure of the parallel sessions is tentative and will be further developed by the core indicator group. The sessions will be organized in a manner to allow discussions on the use of indicators and comparability of assessments across themes. The parallel sessions will be co-Chaired by identified experts paired to represent a ‘policy’ Chair and a ‘technical’ Chair.

Participants

The required participants for this workshop include leads and co-leads on relevant HELCOM indicators and relevant members of HELCOM Expert- and Working Groups (PRESSURE, State and Conservation, GEAR, FISH, MARITIME). The expertise/experience required includes: familiarity with HELCOM indicators, familiarity with the HOLAS II assessment, familiarity with relevant policy requirements (e.g. MSFD Status assessments, Art.8), and/or expertise in the identified topic areas.

Annex 1: List of identified priority areas/topics based on indicator-policy match review and discussion at HELCOM Indicator WS 1-2019

The information below provides a list of priority areas/topics for indicator adjustment/development.

There is also a need to review all existing indicators which will be applied in the third holistic assessment (HOLAS III) so that, where necessary, work and resource requirements can be identified to ensure:

- 1) complete spatial coverage can be achieved,
- 2) missing or partially applied threshold values can be completed,
- 3) relevant regional lists of species and substances are developed/revised, and
- 4) all indicators are functional for the BSAP and the Com Dec 2017/848/EC.

The below list of priority areas/topics is defined per BSAP theme (Biodiversity, Pollution/Hazardous Substances, Eutrophication) based on discussion related to the HELCOM indicator matching to policy requirements.

Use of indicators in HOLAS III and definition of suitable assessment

- Define the assessment system to be applied (what constitutes a suitable assessment and how should components fit together).
- Determine if all existing indicators are required/fit for purpose for the assessment system (what indicators to include).
- Discussion to define a clear concept on how to implement a holistic integrated assessment, and what is possible in short- and longer-term perspectives.

Across-theme application of assessments

- Develop approaches that address linkages across themes (e.g. biodiversity-eutrophication, or biodiversity-hazardous substances).
- Determine if threshold values across interconnected themes provide a comparable and appropriate assessment of status.
- Develop a better understanding of state-pressure aspects (e.g. loads and state) and the linkages of these components within relevant indicators.

Practical

- Gain clear evaluation of time (resources) required to carry out proposed adjustment/development work on indicators.
- Ensure HELCOM indicators are well adapted to support reporting needs of HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States.
- Ensure future development work takes into consideration the DPSIR (Drivers, Pressures, State, Impact, Response) framework and develops relevant linkages.

Biodiversity

HIGH priority areas/indicators identified for adjustment/development– for HOLAS III:

- a. By-catch for relevant species of mammals, birds, and non-commercial fish (MSFD D1C1).
- b. Harbour porpoise abundance and distribution (MSFD D1C2 and D1C4).
- c. Habitat for marine mammals (MSFD D1C5).
- d. Pelagic habitats, particularly a rationalization of existing indicators, a plan forward to develop an appropriate assessment approach (MSFD D1C6) for post-HOLAS III, and

clarification of what can be achieved and how the topic can be tackled for HOLAS III. Define indicator components that can contribute to an assessment, an integration approach, a clear rationale for the assessment system, and longer-term aims (i.e. post-HOLAS III).

- e. Food webs, particularly the diversity and balance of trophic guilds to initiate discussion related to the development of a viable assessment approach (MSFD D4C1 and D4C2). The immediate focus will consider how the topic can be tackled in HOLAS III and the longer-term aims for improved assessments post-HOLAS III. Clarify a framework for the assessment, a suitable constellation of indicators, and a clear rationale for the assessment system.
- f. Seafloor integrity/Benthic habitats, develop an assessment approach, taking into account EU-level work (i.e. TG SEABED) to define an appropriate assessment framework (MSFD D6), and define the indicators to utilize in HOLAS III assessment. Clarify the short- and longer-term aims of the work.
- g. Fish: adjustment of coastal fish indicators and development of relevant assessments in open sea areas. Consideration should be given to the review/creation of a regionally agreed list of fish species for future assessments (MSFD D1C3, D1C4 and D1C5). Separate

Solutions to be addressed – for HOLAS III:

- a. Commercial fish, practical solution to develop a system to ensure data collected under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), via ICES, can be appropriately used in future assessments and maintained as an operational HELCOM indicator (MSFD D3).

HIGH priority to initiate discussion for post-HOLAS III:

- a. Fish, distributional range and patterns should be discussed to initiate planning of appropriate assessments with a longer-term perspective (MSFD D1C4). Clear identification of regional lists of species may also be relevant. Population demographic factors (MSFD D1C3) and habitat (D1C5) were also raised as important issues for some Contacting parties (Finland and Sweden).

Pollution (Hazardous substances, Noise and Litter)

HIGH priority areas/indicators identified for adjustment/development– for HOLAS III:

- a. Hazardous substances concentrations, discuss ways to ensure better spatial coverage. Review the need for regionally agreed lists or priority substances and substances of concern to ensure a suitable assessment is carried out (MSFD D8C1).
- b. Overall assessment and integration, discuss what is required and to be included for the HOLAS III assessment, including the integration of indicators, and longer-term aims with the overall assessment of hazardous substances.
- c. Load (drivers)-State, approaches need to be developed for an assessment approach that improves linkages between pressure/loads and state.
- d. Biological effects, define a suitable approach for the assessment of biological effects and how these assessment can be appropriately included in integrated assessments and HOLAS III (MSFD D8C2). Establish HOLAS III and longer-term work.
- e. Underwater noise, define an appropriate framework for short- (e.g. coverage and impact) and long-term assessments (e.g. biological impacts component – including work linked with OSPAR), and the timeline for the development work.
- f. Litter, define an appropriate framework for short- and long-term assessments, and the timeline for the development work, taking into account work at ICES, OSPAR and the EU).

MEDIUM priority to initiate discussion for HOLAS III:

- a. Contaminants in foodstuffs, should be addressed to clarify the concept and consider how an appropriate assessment should be devised, including potential guidance required through relevant EU processes – e.g. review of reported information via the JRC to be explored (MSFD D9C1).

HIGH priority areas/indicators identified for adjustment/development– post-HOLAS III:

- a. Monitoring approaches, initiate an evaluation of existing monitoring approaches to consider alternative and more cost-effective approaches (e.g. application of ‘master stations’ or sediment core sampling). Implementation will have a time-lag to data availability, thus effects will be seen post-HOLAS III.

Eutrophication

HIGH priority areas/indicators identified for adjustment/development– for HOLAS III:

- a. Oxygen debt and shallow water oxygen, assessments need to be adjusted and developed to create a complete and effective assessment across the Baltic Sea region (MSFD D5C5).
- b. Load-State, approaches need to be developed for an assessment approach that improves linkages between pressure/loads and state.

MEDIUM priority areas/indicators identified for adjustment/development– for HOLAS III:

- a. Phytoplankton and macroalgae, a common understanding and further development of assessments for Chlorophyll concentration, extent and intensity of harmful blooms, and opportunistic microalgae should be carried out (MSFD D5C2, D5C3 and D5C6).
- b. Total nutrients, should be reviewed to ensure a common/comparable approach is applied across the region for future assessments and threshold values are in place in all areas (MSFD D5C1). Priority is high to resolve this issue, but priority is assigned as low here as it is not considered to be a resource intensive issue requiring significant resources nor a time allocation at the second workshop.

Annex 2. List of participants in the HELOCM indicator core group

Further national nominations to this group are welcome and should come via national contact points in the HELCOM Working Groups (e.g. State and Conservation and GEAR).

Contracting Party	Name	Contact
Denmark	Nathia Hass Brandtberg	nathb@mfvm.dk
Co-Chair of State and Conservation	Marie-Louise Krawack	makra@mfvm.dk
Estonia	Urmas Lips	urmas.lips@taltech.ee
Finland	Henrik Nygård	henrik.nygard@ymparisto.fi
Germany (Chair of GEAR)	Andrea Weiß	Andrea.Weiss@uba.de
Lithuania	Aiste Kubiliute	a.kubiliute@aaa.am.lt
Poland	Magdalena Kamińska	m.kaminska@gios.gov.pl
Poland	Małgorzata Marciniewicz-Mykieta	m.marciniewicz@gios.gov.pl
Sweden	Linda Rydell	linda.rydell@havochvatten.se
Co-Chair of State and Conservation	Norbert Häubner	norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se
HELCOM Secretariat	Owen Rowe	Owen.Rowe@helcom.fi
HELCOM Secretariat	Jannica Haldin	Jannica.Haldin@helcom.fi