

Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on  
Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling  
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## Background

TG BALLAST 11-2020 took note of the update on the improvement of the online Joint Harmonised Procedure (JHP) decision support tool and that the new online decision support tool has replaced the previous version since October 2020. The Meeting provided input for its further development and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to incorporate features indicating those ports where the dataset used as part of the assessment were incomplete (TG BALLAST 11-2020 [document 20/05/01](#) and [Outcome of TG BALLAST 11-2020](#), paragraphs 5.1-5.6).

Activity 2.3 of the COMPLETE PLUS project analyses NIS data flows in the Baltic Sea region and develops solutions to harmonize NIS observation data for extracting required information for the HELCOM NIS Core Indicator (Trends in arrival of new non-indigenous species) also used in reporting for the EU MSFD. The HELCOM NIS monitoring programme currently utilizes the AquaNIS database, complemented by data from coordinated open sea monitoring, as the data source for the HELCOM assessments. A web service is under development that links the observations reported by HELCOM Contracting Parties to ICES Biological community database to the JHP Decision Support Tool, which is already linked with AquaNIS, thus enabling the harvesting of NIS observations reported to ICES as part of HELCOM COMBINE as well as NIS observations reported to AquaNIS. This work was supported by STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 ([Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021](#), paragraph 3J.48) as part of the Terms of Reference of the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Expert Group on Non-Indigenous Species for 2021-2024 (JEG NIS) ([document 3J.8](#)).

This document contains an update of the work done by the HELCOM Secretariat in order to accomplish the improvements to the JHP decision support tool agreed by TG BALLAST 11-2020 as well as describes the work done to support the future work for the HELCOM NIS Core Indicator.

## Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the improvements done in the JHP decision support tool;
- provide input on the updated user interface including the modifications on the Routes tab, automatic report as an outcome of the RA analyses, link to ICES database and the information displayed on the online decision support tool web app; and
- agree that the watchlist information should be removed from the online decision support tool.

## Update on the improvement of the online JHP decision support tool

TG BALLAST 8-2017 agreed on the working plan proposed by the HELCOM Secretariat for the desirable upgrades (Phase 2) to the online JHP decision support tool to be implemented by HELCOM in the frame of the COMPLETE project ([Outcome of HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 8-2017](#), paragraph 5.6). Therefore, based on discussion at the meeting and further developments in the COMPLETE project, a beta-version of the new online decision support tool web app was presented to TG BALLAST 10-2019 to obtain input from the Meeting including open issues to be discussed and agreed upon. The Meeting agreed that once finalized the new JHP decision support tool presented should replace the former version after September 2020 ([Outcome of HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 10-2019](#), paragraph 5.6).

### Features to indicate ports with incompleting JHP survey data

HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 11-2020 noted concerns regarding the fact that some data submitted to the HELCOM Secretariat for its inclusion in the online decision support tool and therefore used for the risk assessment analyses are the result of incomplete sampling efforts. The meeting invited the HELCOM Secretariat to implement a feature to indicate those ports where the sampling was incomplete when the risk assessment analyses are carried out as well as in the output of these analyses ([Outcome of HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 11-2020](#), paragraph 5.6). The Secretariat has implemented this feature in the on-line tool by incorporating a warning message that is now displayed when selecting a port with incompleting sampling in the Routes tab, where the risk assessment is carried out. The message reads as follow:

*“Important! Port\_name (Port code) survey did not fulfil all the sampling requirements according to the JHP Port survey protocol”*

This text is also displayed in the .pdf report automatically generated when running the risk assessment analyses ready to download.

### Watch list

The “watch list” is a set of species of a less immediate concern than the target species (TS) but which are candidates for TS status according to the criteria used to build the TS lists. This list acts as a theoretical list for potential TS, although the species included in this list do not have any weight in the risk assessment analyses carried out by the online decision support tool. In addition, TG Ballast agreed ([Outcome of TG BALLAST 10-2019](#), paragraph 6-1) on a set of new criteria to revise the TS list based on an output of the COMPLETE project (Gollash et al., 2020). TG Ballast took note ([Outcome TG BALLAST 11-2020](#), paragraph 6-1) that this revision will be carried out in the frame of the COMPLETE PLUS project and as a result of this revision, an updated TS list for the HELCOM marine area will be submitted to this Meeting for consideration (document 6-1). The species included in the watch list were assessed using the new TS selection criteria as a part of the revision process of the HELCOM TS list (see document 6-1 for further details). Considering that these species are already being assessed using the agreed criteria by the Meeting, and are either included or excluded in the new suggested TS list, the HELCOM Secretariat suggest removing the watch list from the online decision support tool web app for transparency and to avoid misinterpretation such as a potential species being listed in both the watch list and the TS list.

### Link to ICES biological community database

Carrying out the recommendations of the [HELCOM NIS monitoring programme](#) will produce new types of NIS observations data. However, mechanisms to share such harmonized NIS data among national administrations are lacking. Therefore, the HELCOM Secretariat, under the frame of the COMPLETE PLUS project developed technical solutions for those NIS data flows and for extracting the required information for the HELCOM NIS Core Indicator (Trends in arrival of new non-indigenous species) also

used in reporting for EU MSFD for those HELCOM countries being EU members. The HELCOM NIS monitoring programme currently utilizes AquaNIS database, complemented by data from other coordinated monitoring, as the data source for the HELCOM assessments. The link between the JHP online Decision Support Tool and AquaNIS was already established under the frame of the COMPLETE project and presented to this Task Group (TG BALLAST 11-2020, [document 20/05/01](#) and [Outcome of HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 11-2020](#), paragraphs 5.1-5.6). To harmonize all the NIS data flows in the Baltic Sea Region, currently, a web service is under development that links the ICES Biological community database to the JHP Decision Support Tool. This work will enable accessing all NIS data required for the HELCOM NIS Core Indicator from one site (JHP online Decision Support Tool) significantly reducing the manual work as well as increasing the data quality assurance. The new link with the ICES Biological community database mirrors the work carried out to link AquaNIS and the JHP online Decision Support Tool, where a web service and a script are developed to harvest NIS observations that once validated will be incorporated into the HELCOM Biodiversity database. This information will be accessible through the [JHP online Decision Support tool web app](#) as a separate module in the Data tab. Data will be accessible for consultations using a search engine, visualization using the GIS functionalities implemented in the JHP online Decision Support Tool and exported using the download function. As it was designed during the construction of the link with AquaNIS, the development of a separate module for the ICES NIS observations ensure that these data will not interfere or modify the risk assessment analyses performed by the JHP online Decision Support Tool.

## References

Gollasch, S., David, M., Broeg, K., Heitmüller, S., Karjalainen, M., Lehtiniemi, M., Normant-Saremba, M., Ojaveer, H., Olenin, S., Ruiz, M., Helavuori, M., Sala-Pérez, M., Strake, S., 2020. Target species selection criteria for risk assessment based exemptions of ballast water management requirements. *Ocean Coast Manag.* 183, 105021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2019.105021>.