



Document title	Review of existing HELCOM objectives and development of new objectives
Code	3-4
Category	CMNT
Agenda Item	3 – Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan
Submission date	06.08.2019
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	Document 3-3

Background

The strategic plan for the update of the BSAP includes the step to review and adjust the overall structure the BSAP (activity 2.2) to reflect current work in HELCOM. A review of the existing HELCOM ecological objectives and management objectives is to be carried out by HELCOM Working Groups and Expert Groups as part of this activity. The aim of the review of existing objectives is to ensure that they are up to date and reflect the current topics and approach of addressing environmental status and pressures in HELCOM. It was also agreed by HOD 55-2018 to develop new objectives for marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance of the seabed. The aim is to finalize and agree on an updated set of objectives by end of 2019

Under the current 'Maritime segment' of the BSAP the HELCOM objectives are labelled as 'management objectives' and are related to management measures or aspired target levels of pressure from shipping and offshore installations. The Maritime Working Group is invited to review the existing management objectives based on the guidance provided in this document.

To support the development of the updated BSAP, management objectives will also be identified for other pressures. Proposals on management objectives for eutrophication, hazardous substances and new topics (marine litter, underwater noise, loss and disturbance of the seabed) have in a first step been proposed by the Pressure Working Group followed by further consideration by the State & Conservation and Fish groups. The Maritime Working Group is invited to comment and further amend the existing proposals of management objectives for these pressures as seen relevant.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- review the management objectives under the existing BSAP segment on Maritime activities and propose revisions as deemed appropriate (Figure 1), taking note of the proposal by HOD 56-2019 to address also other sea-based activities under this BSAP segment (Annex 1);
- consider the proposed management objectives for additional pressures that are related to shipping and offshore installations (Annex 2); and
- take note of the proposed ecological objectives for the updated BSAP (Annex 3).

1) Review, revision and development of new HELCOM objectives

1.1 Background

Development of the first set of ecological and management objectives was based on work initiated in HELCOM in 2003, further developed through the HELCOM EcoQo project, financed by the EU, and culminating in 2006 with the adoption of a HELCOM Vision, Strategic Goals and Ecological Objectives ([HELCOM 27-2006, para 2.1](#), Figure 1). The Vision describes the overall ambition, whereas Strategic Goals describe the major threats¹ to the Baltic Sea as defined at that time, and Ecological Objectives describe central characteristics of a healthy sea in a generalised way. Through the development and implementation of HELCOM actions and agreements, the goals and objectives are to be met. This also requires the establishment of links to the activities, sources, and societal drivers that are contributing to the current state of the environment.

The *ecological objectives* were developed with the explicit aim to provide a link to environmental monitoring, assessments, research and management. When they were adopted, development of indicators with associated threshold values and targets was already outlined as a next major step for HELCOM. The HELCOM ecological objectives were thus developed as a “seed” for the next step in the process. In hindsight it can be concluded that the achievement of many of HELCOM ecological objectives can to date be assessed by HELCOM core indicators and associated threshold values. For the Maritime segment *management objectives*, which are related to shipping and offshore installations and associated pressures, were instead formulated.

With regard to the formulation of objectives, the aim was to communicate HELCOM’s ambition with a wider stakeholder community ranging from scientists and politicians to the general public. The HELCOM objectives thus reflect the aspired state of the environment in broad terms, while it is the HELCOM core indicators and pressure targets that describes good environmental status.

1.2 Adjustment to the BSAP structure

The ‘BSAP structure’ refers to the strategic goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and will be used to structure the updated BSAP document. As part of the BSAP update process, HOD 55-2018 requested HELCOM Working Groups to initiate the development of ecological or management objectives for the topics marine litter, underwater noise, and loss and disturbance of the seabed and to review existing HELCOM objectives based on guidance given by the GEAR Group. HOD 56-2019 furthermore supported an adjustment to the BSAP structure to better reflect the topics that are currently addressed in HELCOM. The structure follows the existing BSAP closely, maintaining four segments, with the following adjustments:

- to address litter primarily under the segment on Hazardous substances and to consider changing the segment and associated goal ‘Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances and litter’;
- to include under the Maritime segment a broader set of sea-based activities and consider changing the name of the segment and associated strategic goal to ‘Environmentally friendly sea-based activities’. The new topics underwater noise and loss and disturbance of the seabed are primarily assigned to this segment; and
- the segments and goals on Eutrophication and Biodiversity remain as present while the associated activities and actions may be adjusted as relevant.

A tentative list of pressure and activities to be addressed under each segment is outlined in HOD 56-2019 document 2-4. The segment that addresses maritime and other sea-based activities will inherently address multiple pressures and thereby partly overlap with the segments on eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter. This is also the case in the current BSAP and the proposal is to clarify the links using the same approach as currently i.e. to provide cross-reference between segments in the BSAP document. Annex 1 of the present document includes the approach for cross-referencing and a provisional list of pressures and

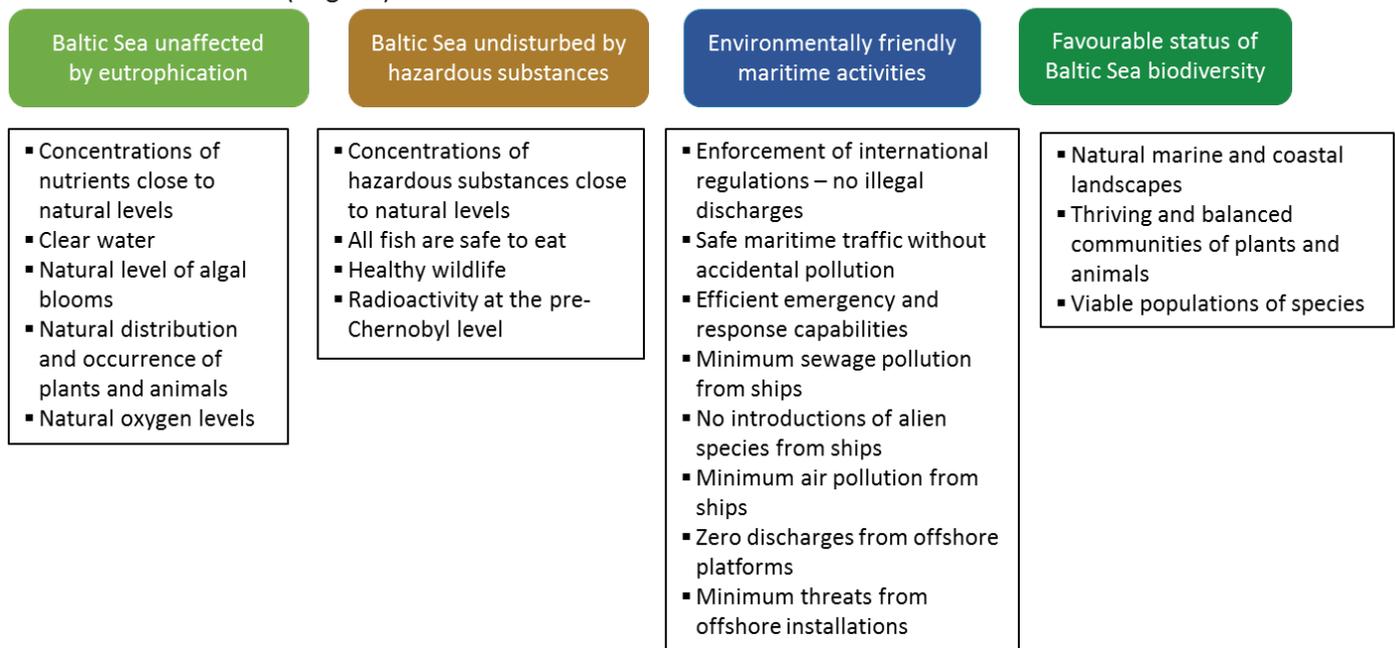
¹ For biodiversity described as loss of biodiversity caused by eutrophication, hazardous substances and maritime activities.

activities under the tentative segment on 'Sea-based activities'. It should be noted the 'BSAP structure' is not directly linked to the HELCOM Working Group structure and that several Working Groups will be involved in the future implementation of actions under each segment in the updated BSAP.

VISION (HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will be maintained):

A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities

SEGMENT and GOALS (original):



SEGMENT and GOALS (as HOD 56-2019):

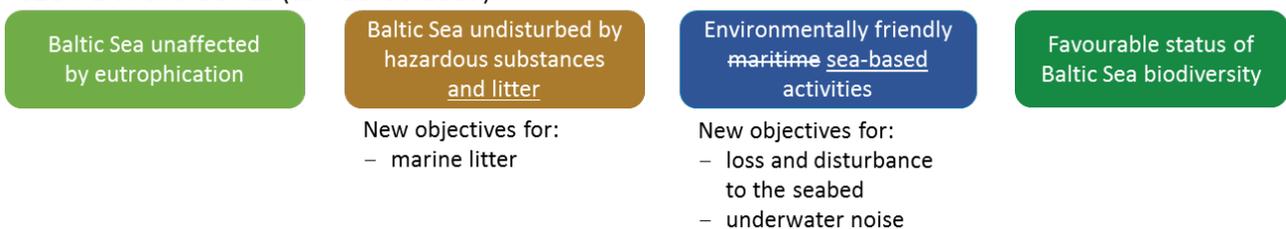


Figure 1. The upper part of the figure shows the current HELCOM system with a vision, strategic goals, ecological objectives (eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity) or management objectives (maritime activities). All existing objectives are to be reviewed by HELCOM Working Groups and new objectives are to be developed for marine litter, loss and disturbance to the seabed, and underwater. The lower part of the figure shows adjustments to the overarching goals as of HOD 56-2019.

1.3 Process

The review of existing objectives and development of new objectives is carried out through an iterative process in such way that the review is initiated by one Working Group, while other Groups will have the possibility to comment the proposals of relevance for the mandate of their work. The review has been initiated at spring meetings 2019 and will continue in autumn 2019 with the aim of presenting final proposals for endorsement by HOD in December 2019. So far the following Groups have initiated the task:

PRESSURE10-2019:

- review of existing ecological objectives for eutrophication and hazardous substances
- proposals on new ecological objectives for marine litter, underwater noise and loss and disturbance to the seabed
- proposals on management objectives for all of the above topics

STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019:

- review of existing ecological objectives for biodiversity
- proposals on management objectives for biodiversity
- further elaboration of the initial ideas from Pressure 10-2019.

FISH 10-2019:

- proposal on ecological and management objectives related to loss and disturbance to the seabed from fisheries.

RESPONSE 26-2019:

- review of the existing management objective under the Maritime segment “Efficient emergency and response capabilities”. The Meeting proposed that the objective should remain as is in the updated BSAP.

The Maritime Working Group is invited to review the objectives under the existing Maritime segment and is also invited to comment objectives proposed by other Working Groups, in particular management objectives related to pressures to which shipping is contributing (Annex 2). Proposed revisions to existing ecological objectives are included for information in Annex 3.

It can be noted that with regard to existing ecological objectives for eutrophication and hazardous substance the Pressure and State and Conservation Working Groups have mainly proposed that they remain close to the current wording since it is found valuable to keep objectives that have become well-known to the wider community. For the biodiversity segment the State and Conservation Working Group has however proposed quite substantial changes to increase the relevance of the objectives.

The outcome of the discussions at these meetings is presented in Working Papers ([PRESSURE 10-2019, DS WP.1](#), [STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019, 8J, WP.1 – Attachment 1](#)) or as part of the main outcome of the meetings ([Outcome FISH 10-2019 para 3.22](#), [RESPONSE 26-2019 para 3.10](#)). The discussions have been held in groups during the Working Group meetings with the guidance to provide initial ideas and noting that the objectives will also be discussed at autumn meetings 2019. As indicated previously the process is iterative. This document includes the latest iterations and commentaries by the Secretariat. For original proposals by the Working Groups please follow the links above.

1.4 Guidance for the review and revision of HELCOM objectives

The guidance given to the Groups is based on the outcome of GEAR 19-2018, GEAR 20-2019, and further elaborations by the Chairs of the Working Groups and the Secretariat (Pressure 10-2019, [document DS2](#), STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019, [document 8J-6](#)). The guidance is the following:

General guidance

The objectives should be:

- linked to HELCOM assessments i.e. achievement should be possible to follow-up through HELCOM assessments,
- easy to communicate to the wider community,

- not too many. Recall that the BSAP structure is meant to reflect overall aim and objectives of HELCOM work to the wider community, but not to list every issue dealt with,
- with regard to the review of existing objectives the following should also be considered:
 - o are objectives missing with respect to new developments in HELCOM since the current BSAP was adopted?
 - o are the objectives up to date (e.g. are the terms used up to date)?
- the terminology of objectives between segments should be harmonized.

Ecological objectives

- should reflect the desired state of the environment and be of aspirational character,
- should be possible to follow-up by use of indicators and associated threshold values,
- with regard to new topics (marine litter, underwater noise, loss and disturbance to seabed) the ecological objectives should focus on the state elements of these topics or on their impacts on the environment e.g. on the concentration, amounts or extent of litter/noise/disturbance to seabeds, or properties of the ecosystem that should be maintained or not harmed.

Management objectives

- management objectives describe the desired effect of or aspirational targets of management measures, (see e.g. management objectives for existing segment on maritime activities)
- follow-up of management objectives should in principle be done using indicators and associated pressure targets or in the case of biodiversity by targets for conservation and protection.

Annex 1 Proposed issues to be addressed under the updated BSAP segment on sea-based activities, as of HOD 56-2019

Segment: Sea-based activities, including Maritime

Goal addressed:

- Environmentally friendly sea-based activities

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching objectives for sea-based activities a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Favourable conservation status of biodiversity'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter.

Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients
- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of marine litter
- Loss and disturbance to the seabed
- Disturbance of species
- Extraction and mortality species (e.g. extraction of target species, incidental catches)
- Introduction of non-indigenous species
- Introduction of underwater noise

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Shipping (e.g. transport and transport infrastructure)
- Production and transport of energy (e.g. operational wind farms, transmission cables)
- Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
- Extraction of living resources (e.g. fishing, hunting, marine plant extraction)
- Extraction of non-living resources (e.g. mineral extraction, oil and gas extraction)
- Restructuring of coastline and seabed morphology (e.g. dredging)
- Aquaculture, marine (including infrastructure)

Annex 2. Proposals on new management objectives

New management objectives to be primarily addressed under the segment on ‘Sea-based activities’

This annex contains details regarding new management objectives, which are expected to be included in the new segment on Sea-based activities. This segment will also include existing and/or revised management objectives from the existing Maritime segment.

Underwater noise

PRESSURE 10-2019 proposed a number of management objectives but they have not been further elaborated, mainly because they were formulated as actions rather than objectives. For full outcome of discussion see [PRESSURE 10-2019, DS WP.1.](#)

Proposal	Proposed by	Comment by Secretariat
-	At present two guiding proposals exist: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) that two separate objectives should be developed; one for impulsive noise and one for continuous noise (STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019) 2) that the objectives should focus on underwater noise only (GEAR 10-2019) 	Since input of underwater noise also stem from shipping, the Meeting may wish to propose a new management objective, in particular for continuous noise.

Loss and disturbance to the seabed

Shipping is considered to contribute to disturbance to the seabed e.g. as a major contributor to “widespread” disturbance in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Impact Index (BSII) as part of HOLAS. The proposals on management objectives in this regard mainly originate from PRESSURE 10-2019. It can be noted that additional objectives were proposed but are not included in this document since they were formulated as actions rather than objectives. For full outcome of discussion see [PRESSURE 10-2019, DS WP.1.](#)

Proposal	Proposed by	Comment by Secretariat
‘Sustainable use of sea beds’	PRESSURE 10-2019.	Shipping has been identified as an activity that contributes to widespread disturbance to the seabed in shallow areas of the Baltic Sea (see e.g. section 3.2.4, BSEP 164). The Meeting may wish to discuss the development of an objective related specifically to shipping.
‘Minimise areas affected by (anthropogenically induced) hypoxia’	PRESSURE 10-2019	
‘Methods for ecological sustainable mineral extraction’	PRESSURE 10-2019	
‘Sustainable fishery practices’	PRESSURE 10-2019, further amended by FISH 10-2019. FISH 10-2019 also discussed more	

	specific proposals e.g. “Gear with less impact on the seabed”, and “Gear avoiding by-catch of marine mammals, seabirds and protected fish species”.	
--	---	--

New management objectives to be primarily addressed under other segments

Eutrophication

The proposed management objective is primarily meant to be addressed under the segment on Eutrophication but is also linked to Maritime activities.

Proposal	Origin	Comment by Secretariat
<p>‘Minimize input of nutrients from human activities’ <u>OR</u></p> <p>‘Minimize input from agriculture and...’– with the proposal to formulate an objective where a few critical sectors are pinpointed in the objective <u>OR</u></p> <p>To link management objectives to specific sources/sector rather than pressures as discussed by PRESSURE 10-2019. This approach can potentially result in long lists of management objectives but could be further explored, e.g. to have one overarching management objective (e.g. as the first alternative above) and a list of more detailed associated objectives than can support the follow-up of HELCOM objectives and development of actions.</p>	PRESSURE 10-2019, amended by STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019.	Since input of nutrients also stem from shipping the Meeting may wish to discuss the proposals or propose an alternative management objective. In this regard, the Meeting may also consider the need to retain or possibly revise the existing management objectives “Minimum sewage pollution from ships” and “Minimum air pollution from ships”.

Hazardous substances

The proposed management objective is primarily meant to be addressed under the segment on Hazardous substance and litter but is also linked to Maritime activities.

Proposal	Origin	Comment by Secretariat
<p>Minimize input of hazardous substances <u>OR</u></p> <p>Minimize input from industry, households, agriculture ...– i.e. formulate an objective where a few critical sectors are pinpointed in the objective as also proposed for eutrophication, <u>OR</u></p>	PRESSURE 10-2019, amended by STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019.	Since input of hazardous substances also stem from shipping, the Meeting may wish to discuss the proposals or propose an alternative management objective.

<p>To link management objectives to specific sources/sector rather than pressures as discussed by PRESSURE 10-2019. This approach can potentially result in long lists of management objectives but could be further explored, e.g. to have one overarching management objective (e.g. as the first alternative above) and a list of more detailed associated objectives than can support the follow-up of HELCOM objectives and development of actions.</p>		
<p>Replacement of hazardous substance by more environmental friendly alternatives</p>	<p>STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019</p>	

Marine litter

The proposed management objectives are primarily meant to be addressed under the segment on 'Hazardous substance and litter' but is also linked to Maritime activities.

Proposal	Origin	Comment by Secretariat
<p>'Products are designed, produced, used and discharged to minimize marine litter'</p>	<p>PRESSURE 10-2019, amended by STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019</p>	<p>Since input of litter also stem from shipping the Meeting may wish to discuss the proposals as well as to consider the development of management objectives that are directly related to shipping</p>
<p>'Amounts of litter are significantly reduced on beaches and in the sea'</p>		

Annex 3 Proposal on ecological objectives related to eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter

The outcome on discussion on ecological objectives is mainly included for information, but the Maritime Working Group may also provide comments on the proposals.

Eutrophication

The work has focused on the review of existing ecological objectives. General conclusion of PRESSURE 10-2019 and STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019:

- Eutrophication state variables are well covered by the objectives – no need for new objectives
- Keep them mainly as they are. It is valuable to keep well known objectives.

PRESSURE 10-2019 proposed to tentatively exchange the word ‘natural’ which is used in 4 out the 5 objectives on eutrophication but STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 did not support this proposal, partly since no alternatives have been proposed but also for the reason of minimizing revisions to the current objectives.

STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 expressed differing views with regard to the ecological objective; ‘Clear water’; some participants in the Group felt that is a good objective since it easy to envision and communicate but others felt that it is not achievable in the Baltic Sea. Pending a conclusion on the objective on ‘Clear water’, the proposed list of ecological objectives for eutrophication is thus still:

- **Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels**
- **[Clear water]**
- **Natural level of algal blooms**
- **Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals**
- **Natural oxygen levels**

Hazardous substances

The work has focused on the review of existing ecological objectives. General conclusion of PRESSURE 10-2019 and STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019:

- Keep mainly as they are. Valuable to keep well known objectives.

PRESSURE 10-2019 proposed to consider the development of a new objective for pharmaceuticals but this was not supported by STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 as pharmaceuticals are considered as covered by the general ecological objective on concentrations of hazardous substances.

The HELCOM Expert Group MORS was invited to review the objective related to radioactivity and MORS EG 9-2019 was of the view that reference to pre-Chernobyl objective is backward-looking objective and made proposal on an updated objective.

Based on proposals by PRESSURE 10-2019 and further elaborations by STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 and MORS EG 9-2019 the tentative list of ecological objectives for hazardous substances is:

- **Concentrations of hazardous substances close to natural levels**
- **All seafood safe to eat**
- **Healthy wildlife and food webs**
- **Radioactivity at negligible risk level to humans and environment**

It can be noted that at GEAR 10-2019, that was held after PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019, it was proposed that instead of the term ‘wildlife’ to use a term that also embraces biodiversity more generally.

Marine litter

The work has focused on the developed of new ecological objectives. Based on PRESSURE 10-2019 and amended by STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 the following proposed have been made:

'Wildlife safeguarded from marine litter', OR 'No harm to wildlife from marine litter'

It can be noted that at GEAR 10-2019, that was held after PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019, it was proposed that instead of the term 'wildlife' to use a term that also embraces biodiversity more generally and also to use the term 'litter' instead of 'marine litter'.

Underwater noise

The work has focused on the developed of new ecological objectives. Based on PRESSURE 10-2019 and amended by STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019 the following proposed have been made:

'No harm to wildlife from anthropogenic noise' OR 'Introduction of sound does not harm wildlife'

It can be noted that at GEAR 10-2019, that was held after PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019, it was proposed that instead of the term 'wildlife' to use a term that also embraces biodiversity more generally.

Loss and disturbance to seabed habitats.

The work has focused on the developed of new ecological objectives. PRESSURE 10-2019 made the following proposals:

'Healthy seabed habitats' OR 'Maintaining natural seabed conditions'

Fish 10-2019 proposed to consider "Undisturbed seabed from human activities" as an alternative objective but a preferred option by the Meeting was to develop an objective related to maintaining resilience and functions of seabed, along the lines of Descriptor 6 of the MSFD, i.e. "Sea-floor integrity is at a level that ensures that the structure and functions of the ecosystems are safeguarded and benthic ecosystems, in particular, are not adversely affected". Ecological objectives related to loss and disturbance to seabed habitats will also be further elaborated by STATE & CONSERVATION 11-2019.