



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances
in the Baltic Sea

MORS EG 5-2015

Oulu, Finland, 19-21 May 2015

Document title	Information on the outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings of relevance to MORS EG
Code	2-3-Rev.1
Category	INF
Agenda Item	2 – Information by the Secretariat, the Contracting Parties and IAEA
Submission date	19.05.2015
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

The outcomes of the following meetings within the framework of HELCOM held in the intersessional period are available in the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#):

- 46th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation ([HOD 46-2014](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 16-17 September 2014;
- Second Workshop on Operationalization of HELCOM core indicators ([CORESET II 2-2014](#)), Gothenburg, Sweden 29-30 September 2014;
- Tenth Expert Workshop of the HELCOM Project for the Revision of Monitoring Programmes ([MORE 10-2014](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 1-2 October 2014;
- First Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation ([STATE-CONSERVATION 1-2014](#)), Pärnu, Estonia, 7-11 November 2014;
- 47th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation ([HOD 47-2014](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 9-10 December 2014;
- First Meeting of the Project for the Development of the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea ([HOLAS II 1-2014](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 16-17 December 2014;
- 36th Meeting of the Helsinki Commission ([HELCOM 36-2015](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 3-4 March 2015;
- Second Meeting of the Project for the Development of the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea ([HOLAS II 2-2015](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 17-18 March 2015;
- Second Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation ([STATE-CONSERVATION 2-2015](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 11-15 May 2015.

Issues of relevance to MORS EG, extracted from the outcomes of the aforementioned HELCOM meetings, are listed in the **Attachment**.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Issues of relevance to MORS EG from recent HELCOM meetings:

[HOD 46-2014](#)

The Meeting adopted the Terms of Reference for the new HELCOM Working Groups:

- State of the Environment and Nature Conservation ([STATE-CONSERVATION](#))
- Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area ([PRESSURE](#))
- Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries ([FISH](#))
- Sustainable Agricultural Practices ([AGRI](#))

The Meeting adopted the refined Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach ([GEAR](#)).

The HELCOM streamlining process was completed in autumn 2014 and HOD 46-2014 agreed on the new HELCOM working structure as reflected in the [organogram](#). [Key results from the streamlining process 2013-2014](#) are available on the HELCOM website.

The Meeting took note of the outcomes of GEAR 6-2014 and GEAR 7-2014 in general and noted the establishment of the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM). The working group will develop a proposal for joint documentation of existing and planned measures to reach Good Environmental Status, and explore possibilities to develop plans for new joint or coordinated measures, with the view of preparing a joint report related to programmes of measures that the Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States can use as a joint component when reporting MSFD Article 13, by the end of 2015.

The Meeting stressed the importance of that the HELCOM core indicators are developed jointly through the HELCOM CORESET II project and encouraged all Contracting Parties to participate in the project.

The Meeting also noted that the list of HELCOM core indicators resulting from CORESET II will be presented to HOD for adoption at the end of the CORESET II project, i.e. in June 2015, and clarified that the list will be used in the development of the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea.

The Meeting noted that the lack of a HELCOM expert group on hazardous substances is hindering the work of developing core indicators and coordinated monitoring programmes of hazardous substances.

The Meeting endorsed that the first version of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual will be published through this consultation process by 15 October 2014.

The Meeting noted that HELCOM GEAR has agreed in principle that the Second Holistic Assessment should be developed so that it can be used by the Contracting Parties also being EU Member States as a joint roof report for the 2018 reporting obligations under MSFD Articles 8, 9, and 10, thus there is a common understanding among the EU Member States on this matter, and recognized that this will require some flexibility in the project implementation to accommodate for possible changes in EC guidelines for reporting and methodological standards.

[CORESET II 2-2014](#)

The Meeting took note of the [presentation](#) by Ms Tamara Zalewska on the core indicator 'Radioactive substances: Caesium-137 in fish and surface waters', noting that it is developed by the HELCOM Expert group on monitoring of radioactive substances in the Baltic Sea (MORS). The indicator is in principle operational: monitoring exists and technical guidelines are described in HELCOM Recommendation 26-3 and an assessment methodology has been proposed. The GES/environmental target is primarily based on pre-Chernobyl levels. Data is annually submitted to HELCOM MORS database.

The Meeting took note of [document 4-2](#), on the updating frequency of HELCOM Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets (BSEFS), and the proposal to make use of these facts sheets as appropriate when developing the core indicator reports.

The Meeting took note of [document 4-1](#), including suggestions from the Project Manager on the proposed rejection or further development of HELCOM core, pre-core and candidate indicators.

The Meeting took note of [document 4-3](#), and the view of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to reconsider a number of core indicators agreed at HOD 41-2013 and [document 4-4](#), Danish scientific appraisal of HELCOM's and OSPAR's indicators. The Meeting recalled that CORESET II 2-2014 is invited to consider the information, propose ways forward on indicators with differing views, and recommend to GEAR and STATE which indicators should be further developed in the project.

The Meeting agreed on recommendations for all core-, pre-core-and candidate indicators (Annex 3) also contained together with the comments from EE, LV, LT in the [revised version of document 4-3](#) available in the Meeting Portal.

[MORE 10-2014](#)

Content and presentation of the online monitoring manual

The Meeting was of the view that the monitoring manual provides important stock-taking information that should be kept even if the current information is sometimes fragmented e.g. frequency of sampling has only been provided by some countries. The aim is to complete the manual with information from all Contracting Parties.

The Meeting discussed the lack of monitoring programme related to contaminants in food and was of the opinion that current monitoring of contaminants in biota can theoretically be used to follow progress towards the HELCOM objective "Fish safe to eat". However methodologies e.g. related to species size, matrix, traceability of origin, differ and the relationship between the two strands of monitoring have not been clarified yet. The Meeting agreed to add a reflection on this to the sub-programme Contaminants in biota, on the Programme topic file for Contaminants.

Status of existing monitoring guidelines

The Meeting considered the status of existing monitoring guidelines and concluded that the review should relate to adjustment of the guidelines to monitoring activities in the Monitoring Manual, the further coordination of monitoring activities, and the state of the art of the guidelines and identified the need to revise existing guidelines on:

- hydrographic and hydrochemical variables (C2)
- phytoplankton (C4 and C6) to consider e.g. new monitoring platforms
- mesozooplankton (C7) where ZEN-QAI is in the process of revising some components
- contaminants (Part D) in relation to all three purposes as specified above.

The Meeting considered that the guidelines for coastal fish (C10), and guidelines for PLC and MORS are not in need of revision at this time.

Availability of groups for developing sub-programmes and need to adapt monitoring programmes

The Meeting underlined that the work on contaminants, including the revision of guidelines, will require the establishment of a HELCOM expert group or network on hazardous substances.

The Meeting recommended that the priority for the revision of guidelines should be to make adjustment to align the guidelines to current monitoring programmes and enable carrying out planned assessments e.g. the 2nd HELCOM Holistic Assessment on the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea.

STATE & CONSERVATION 1-2014

Monitoring

The Meeting discussed the current Monitoring Manual and noted that it is work in progress and at the moment serves as a documentation of HELCOM monitoring programmes. The Meeting noted that in the future technical guidelines, including updated guidelines from the COMBINE manual, will also be integrated in the Monitoring Manual. The Meeting pointed out that the final form of the Monitoring Manual should serve several purposes, from strategic planning of monitoring to the practical implementation of guidelines.

The Meeting noted that in the future the Manual will be updated annually. The Meeting was of the view that more significant changes should be reviewed by the STATE group before revised in the Manual but mandated the Secretariat to revise typos, errors and minor revisions of national information upon request by Contracting Parties.

The Meeting discussed how to proceed with review and revision of the COMBINE manual, including the updating of existing HELCOM monitoring guidelines as well as development of new guidelines for topics where guidelines are incomplete or lacking. The Meeting proposed that existing expert groups (SEAL, MORS EG) and projects (FISH-PRO II, PEG, ZEN QAI, PLC) should be used as far as possible for this work. For those components of the Manual for which there are no existing expert groups, the Meeting suggested a more flexible approach, such as bi- and tri-lateral cooperation between the Contracting Parties to draft HELCOM guidelines and making use of existing guidelines in Contracting Parties and under other fora such as OSPAR.

The Meeting welcomed the information presented by Germany ([Presentation 15](#)) on guidance for monitoring and analysis of hazardous substances elaborated under OSPAR and ICES which could be made use of for revising the related sections of the HELCOM COMBINE manual and invited Germany to present the relevant guidelines related to hazardous substances for consideration at the next STATE meeting.

The Meeting agreed that the next meeting of STATE should review existing national and regional guidelines and decide on how to divide the work to further develop the HELCOM guidelines. In order to prepare an overview of existing guidelines, the Meeting invited Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat (UllaLi.Zweifel@helcom.fi) in advance of the next meeting of the Working Group of existing national guidelines as well as other relevant guidelines from other fora that could be adapted to the HELCOM region.

The Meeting welcomed of information on recent activities of the HELCOM Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea (MORS EG) as presented by the MORS EG representative Ms. Eia Jakobson, Estonia ([Presentation 17](#)). The Meeting noted that work has started to elaborate the next thematic assessment covering 2011-2013 and pointed out that there might be a need for MORS EG to reconsider their schedule (including data coverage period) based on the plans of the HOLAS II project.

Core indicators

The Meeting noted that GEAR 8-2014 was of the view that hazardous substance core indicators should be aligned with implementation of the Environmental Quality Standards Directive, EQSD. The Meeting was of the view that the request of GEAR to align core indicator GES-boundaries with EQSbiota from the EQSD is not straight forward and might not be feasible for some core indicators relating to environmental state (MSFD D8) because the approach to derive the EQSbiota sometimes leads to unrealistically low GES boundaries. In such cases the Meeting considered it more appropriate to base the assessment on trend results or use GES boundaries developed in OSPAR (EAC, BAC).

The Meeting stressed the importance to influence the discussions in the groups for D8 and D9 in the review process of the Commission Decision on criteria and methodological standards on good environmental status (GES), and urged those Contracting Parties that have national experts present in these groups to provide input to the process.

The Meeting considered the core-, pre-core- and candidate hazardous substance and bio-effect indicators under development in CORESET II ([document 3MA-1](#)) and supported in principle further development of

these indicators, although some countries expressed concern about indicators for which no national monitoring is yet in place.

Assessments

The Meeting took note of the HOLAS II project description adopted by HOD 46-2014.

The Meeting discussed the assessment period for the upcoming HOLAS II project, taking into account that a draft report should be ready by mid-2017 to cater for national consultations while a final report should be prepared by mid-2018 ([Presentation 20](#)). The Meeting noted the concern raised by Germany that the deadline for the pre-draft by mid-2017 may be too late and that the MSFD reporting schedule should be checked nationally. The Meeting also noted the proposal by DG ENV to possibly update the assessment with data that becomes available during the public consultation period.

The Meeting recalled that the 1st holistic assessment was based on data from 2003-2007 and was of the opinion that a continuous use of data is desirable i.e. that the 2nd holistic assessment should use data from 2008 while the assessment period (e.g. data used in the assessment tool) could be from 2011 onwards.

The Meeting discussed the last year of the assessment period and felt that it was too early to have a specific proposal but stressed that as recent data as possible should be used, preferably including data from 2016. The Meeting also pointed out that such recent data is also necessary since the monitoring of some parameters will only start in 2014-2016 (e.g. underwater noise and litter).

The Meeting also noted that in 2016 the data on airborne and waterborne inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances will only be available up to 2014 since 2015 data will not be available in the autumn of 2017.

The Meeting noted the opinion of Latvia that HELCOM core indicators will not be sufficient as a basis for the planned thematic and holistic assessments. The Meeting stressed that while core indicators form the basis for the assessment as agreed in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, supporting information e.g. trends and BSEFS, will provide important information for interpreting the results from the indicator-based assessment tools.

The Meeting noted that GEAR 7-2014 agreed in principle that the HOLAS II assessment should be developed as a joint "roof report" for the 2018 MSFD reporting for those Contracting Parties who are also EU member states.

The Meeting discussed the timing of other planned HELCOM assessments (cf. Work plan for STATE [document 6J-1](#) and Annex 4) and invited FISH-PRO II and MORS EG to revise their schedule for producing thematic assessments in order to take into account the planned schedule of HOLAS II.

The Meeting considered the information on the updating of Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets, BSEFS (previously called Indicator Fact Sheets) contained in the [document 4MA-2](#), noting that the fact sheets serve as supporting information for HELCOM assessments. The Meeting was of the opinion that there is a need to clarify the status of those fact sheets that have not been updated in recent years. The Meeting took note of information from Germany and Finland on some fact sheets that will no longer be updated and invited the Secretariat to contact the relevant authors/institutes to clarify the status of other fact sheets. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to submit an updated version of the table to the next meeting of STATE.

HOD 47-2014

The Meeting welcomed the work to produce a joint document of regional coordination of programme of measures by the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM) established under Gear, and noted that the document will be finalized by the end of 2015 so that Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States can use it in the reporting of MSFD Article 13. The Meeting furthermore noted that in the development of the document further possibilities to coordinate measures to implement the BSAP, Ministerial Declarations, and HELCOM recommendations will be explored.

The Meeting noted the development by Gear of a "HELCOM plan to improve regional coherence in the implementation of marine policies to reach Good Environmental Status of the Baltic Sea".

The Meeting took note of the information that a new follow-up system to the Baltic Sea Action Plan and Ministerial Declarations is being developed and that it will be based on indicators and agreed procedures to conclude when actions are accomplished.

The Meeting agreed on the [Work Plan](#) for State and Conservation for 2014-2016.

The Meeting took note of and welcomed the progress report on the CORESET II project. The Meeting recognized that the development of core indicators may need to continue beyond the finalization by mid-2015 of the current CORESET II project to provide sufficient indicators for the upcoming holistic assessment.

The Meeting recalled that the information regarding the activities of HELCOM expert meetings is sent to HELCOM HOD and should be used by the HODs to follow the work in HELCOM at large.

[HOLAS II 1-2014](#)

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

[HELCOM 36-2015](#)

The Meeting considered and adopted the HELCOM work plan to improve regional coherence in moving towards Good Environmental Status ([document 2-9](#)) pending the clarification of the study reservation by Germany by 13 March 2015.

The Meeting considered the updated Roadmap on HELCOM activities ([document 2-16](#)), supported the integration of the activities of the HELCOM Work Plan with the HELCOM Roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach, and decided to use it for planning of HELCOM actions and milestones.

The Meeting considered and adopted the modernized Guidelines on granting observer status to intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations to the Helsinki Commission ([document 5-2](#)).

The Meeting considered the five applications for observership from the European Network of Freshwater Research Organizations (EurAqua), the John Nurminen Foundation (JNF), the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) and Interferry and granted observer status to the aforementioned organizations.

[HOLAS II 2-2015](#)

Indicators and assessment units

The Meeting took note of the presentation of HELCOM sub-divisions for assessment purposes (document 3-2, Presentation 1) and that the appropriate assessment scale is proposed for each HELCOM indicator as indicated in document 3-3.

The Meeting took note of the overview of HELCOM core indicator as presented by Ms. Lena Avellan, Project Manager of HELCOM CORESET II ([document 3-3](#) and [3-3 Rev 1](#)).

The Meeting took note that the HELCOM indicators are at different stages of development and that proposed GES boundaries will be available for a sub-set of indicators by end of the CORESET II project in June 2015.

The Meeting recognized that the set of core indicators adopted by mid-June 2015 will not be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the holistic assessment and further noted that the Secretariat is exploring possibilities to continue the development of HELCOM indicators after the completion of CORESET II and that it is crucial for Contracting Parties to take part in that work.

The Meeting recognized that the review of the Commission decision on GES (2010/477/EU) may change the framework for the gap analysis of indicators but that the development of indicators needs to continue although the GES decision has not been revised yet with the view of delivering an as good as possible holistic assessment by 2018.

The Meeting concluded that all Contracting Parties intend to use HELCOM core indicators and that there is a need to jointly identify gaps in the set of core indicators.

The Meeting recalled that at HOLAS II 1-2014 some Contracting Parties were of the view that also national indicators should be considered in the holistic assessment to complement the HELCOM core indicators (para 3.3). The Meeting agreed to come back to the issue on possible use of national indicators in addition to the HELCOM core indicators in the holistic assessment at the next meeting of the HOLAS II project. The Meeting recognized that if additional indicators should be used in the holistic assessment there is need to agree on common principles for their use, for example that the additional indicators as a minimum should be used jointly on a sub-basin scale. The Meeting proposed that national lists of indicators and available national gaps analyses should be submitted to the Project coordinator of HOLAS II (lena.bergstrom@helcom.fi) preferably by mid April 2015 in a format similar to [document 3-4](#).

Components of the holistic assessment

The Meeting acknowledged that the holistic assessment report needs to be based on the guidelines from the Commission to serve the purpose of a roof report for the MSFD 2018 reporting but that the output from the project should be developed to serve also other target audiences. It was noted that a comparison with the latest assessment is desirable to allow an assessment of progress towards GES.

The Meeting reiterated that the holistic assessment should consider all components of MSFD Article 8.

Roadmap for carrying out the second HELCOM holistic assessment

The Meeting developed the outline for the second holistic assessment based on the outcome of discussions at the Meeting ([document 5-1](#)) and revised it according to [Annex 2](#).

The Meeting discussed the Roadmap for implementation of the HOLAS II project and revised it according to [Annex 3](#).

STATE & CONSERVATION 2-2015

Development of data arrangements for HELCOM monitoring data and assessments

The Meeting took note of the summary of existing data flow arrangement in support of the HELCOM core indicators (document 3MA-1, [Presentation 1](#)), as presented by the Secretariat. To improve data flow arrangements for status indicators in HELCOM the Meeting agreed to the following, with responsibilities in brackets:

- systematize and improve, where needed, existing reporting routines (Secretariat and relevant EGs/projects)
- define the parameters and format for new needed reporting to support HELCOM indicators (indicator experts+Secretariat+ICES)
- develop databases/datahost arrangements for parameters required for core indicators where they are missing (seal, birds, coastal fish, etc.), when possible by mid-2016 (Secretariat with support of relevant projects and in collaboration with relevant EGs)
- document the "manual" QA of data carried out by EGs and projects (relevant EGs and projects)
- explore use of EUTRO-OPER system for the production of data products and QA of data products for other indicators/thematic assessments (Secretariat)
- use existing EGs and expert projects in the production and quality check of data products e.g. SEAL EG, FISH-PRO II, JWG Birds, PEG, MORS, ZEN.

Core indicators and Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets

The Meeting took note of the statement by Germany that all comments and votes given on the indicators do not reflect a consolidated German view but a view on the expert level which still needs to be discussed and confirmed officially. Germany will try to lift their study reservation by HOD 48-2015. The Meeting further noted the statement by Germany that for many indicators a testing phase of about 2 years will be necessary.

Based on the technical review of the indicators, the Meeting agreed on the GES-boundaries and publication of the following core-indicator reports, with the following comments and exceptions in addition to the general study reservations by Denmark and Germany:

19. Radioactive substances

The Meeting agreed to the proposed GES boundary and publication of the core indicator report, noting that Germany still needs to consult on the GES-boundary nationally.