



## Memo of the seventh meeting of the Task Group on HELCOM Marine Protected Areas (MPA TG 7-2018)

### Introduction

In accordance with the decisions of STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 ([Outcome](#) paragraph 3N.40) the seventh Meeting of the Task Group on HELCOM Marine Protected Areas (MPA TG 7-2018) was held as an online meeting on 17 September 2018.

The list of participants is contained in Annex 1 to this Memo.

The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland.

Ms. Jannica Haldin and Ms. Petra Kääriä (HELCOM Secretariat) acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to identify which of the actions under Recommendations 35/1 and 37/2 have not yet been fully implemented, how to assess level of implementation and present these to STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018, with the intention to provide concrete proposals on possible topics and avenues of cooperation, e.g. on sufficiency of measures, between OSPAR ICG MPA and State and Conservation.

### Review of actions under Recommendation 35/1 'System of coastal and marine Baltic Sea Protected Areas (HELCOM MPAs)'

The Meeting noted that the Recommendation has been reviewed based on results published in 2016, and results can be seen both under Chapter 5 of [BSEP 148](#) on ecological coherence assessment and the [Implementation of Baltic Sea Action Plan report 2018](#).

The Meeting reviewed paragraphs a-r of the Recommendation, amended [an excel file](#) containing the actions and criteria for the accomplishment and provided the following comments:

*a) reach the target set by the HELCOM 2010 Moscow Ministerial Declaration that at least 10% of the marine area in all sub-basins of the Baltic Sea including the EEZ areas beyond territorial waters is covered by MPAs where scientifically justified. In addition, where ecologically meaningful, coastal terrestrial areas can be included*

- Sweden has a governmental assignment to propose more HELCOM MPAs during 2018, which should be taken into account the future review of this action.
- The number of Natura 2000 areas in Finland is higher than the amount of HELCOM MPAs (which is the case in most Contracting Parties).
- The current number of HELCOM MPAs in EEZ is 5% (according to the 2016 evaluation).
- The assessment criteria are considered as appropriate.
- The action is partly accomplished.

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- b) *review whether new coastal and marine areas justify being selected as HELCOM MPAs, and to designate new sites as HELCOM MPAs where ecologically meaningful, especially in offshore areas beyond territorial waters*
- Overall it needs to be reviewed in State and Conservation, whether there are in fact any areas for which it would be scientifically justifiable to have a lower cover than 10% coverage.
  - The action is partly accomplished.
- c) *ensure that HELCOM MPAs inter alia provide specific protection to those species, habitats, biotopes and biotope complexes included in the HELCOM Red Lists, as agreed in the HELCOM 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration, by considering these in the site selection procedure as well as in site management (for example by specific conservation and restoration measures including restoration of degraded ecosystems);*
- It was concluded that in its current form, if a species/biotope/biotope complex is included in at least one MPA, the criterion of this action is fulfilled for that species, irrespective of whether the species is mentioned in the management plan or accounted for specifically. It needs to be further deliberated on how to take into account e.g. connectivity and replication.
  - The action is partly accomplished (accomplished for the threatened biotope complexes).
  - OSPAR has a separate Recommendation for threatened species and habitats, against which reporting is done.
  - The Meeting suggested cross-checking the similarities and overlap between HELCOM and OSPAR red listed species and habitats to identify common topics.
- d) *ensure, when selecting new areas, that the network of HELCOM MPAs is ecologically coherent and takes into account connectivity between sites including for example migration routes, species mobility and areas of special ecological significance such as spawning areas*
- The Meeting suggested that a new ecological coherence assessment would be done to support the update of the BSAP.
  - The action is partly accomplished.
  - In Skagerrak, a connectivity study on marine larvae spreading has been done. The study focuses on a biodiversity perspective and could as such possibly be extended to cover a larger area in the Baltic Sea.
  - The connectivity results of the BAMBI project could feed into the next eco-coherence assessment. The methodology used in the project will possibly be presented to STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018. Adding OSPAR MPA to the analysis of connectivity would bring added value to the analysis.
  - The Meeting invited Mr. Per Johnsson to present both approaches to a future meeting of State & Conservation.
- e) *make use of computer-based site selection tools such as MARXAN for a HELCOM-wide approach which maximizes the chance of creating a coherent network of HELCOM MPAs and at the same time minimizing the impact of pressures and conflicts with other interests*
- Computer-based site selection tools include tools like MOSAIC, ZONATION, and R packages developed for this purpose.
  - As an example, computer based site selection tools have been used to identify important bird areas by BirdLife International under OSPAR ICG MPA. Baltic-wide results of such an analysis, and their overlap with existing MPAs, could provide valuable information.
  - Criteria on accomplishment for this action need to be developed at a later stage. This could be done intersessionally possibly before STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2018.
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- f) *encourage Contracting Parties which are also EU Member States to designate when feasible all appropriate Natura 2000 sites as HELCOM MPAs, and to consider all Natura 2000 sites as well as other marine protected areas when evaluating the network of marine protected areas*
- The Meeting emphasized the need to discuss the reason behind and possibly revise the size limit for the HELCOM MPAs.
  - When new HELCOM MPAs have been selected from Sweden, many Natura 2000 areas have been excluded because they were too small to fulfil the size criterion for HELCOM MPAs.
  - Several Natura 2000 areas can be joined to designate one HELCOM MPA, however the management of the sites might need to take into account several management guidelines.
  - The Meeting suggested the criteria for the action as in the excel file in the Annex to this document.
  - The Meeting considered whether there are any Natura 2000 habitats/species are not covered by HELCOM, and noted that this needs to be clarified.
  - This action needs to be further considered at a later stage.
- g) *encourage Contracting Parties which are also OSPAR Contracting Parties to designate, when appropriate, OSPAR MPAs as HELCOM MPAs in order to harmonize the networks where the conventions geographical scope overlap*
- The Meeting noted the current Swedish governmental assignment which also includes to designate OSPAR MPAs as HELCOM MPAs, as this would give a more thorough description of the marine environment.
- h) *manage HELCOM MPAs effectively and to develop and apply by 2015 management plans or measures for all existing HELCOM MPAs, and to establish management plan or measures for every new MPA within five years after its designation, as agreed in the HELCOM 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration*
- The Meeting highlighted the need to focus on improving the management of the network.
  - There is a link with this action and Aichi target 11.
  - The Meeting emphasized the need for more cooperation with OSPAR on this action.
  - The MPA managers' workshop identified the need to prepare multi-management plans covering all available policies.
  - This action is partly accomplished
- i) *update the management plans when necessary and in accordance with other legal requirements with a maximum of 12 years intervals*
- The Meeting suggested to rewrite: "Review and, if necessary, update the management plans every 12 years", as a management plan should be reviewed with a 12 year interval but should be updated when needed (not necessarily with a maximum of 12 years interval)
  - This action is not accomplished.
- j) *harmonise the designation of neighbouring HELCOM MPAs in transboundary marine areas, and where appropriate to join forces between neighbouring states when setting up management plans or measures for such HELCOM MPAs*
- The Meeting discussed the meaning of 'transboundary' and 'cross-border' and suggested that the wording of the paragraph would be clarified. The Meeting noted that good examples of this were presented at the September MPA managers' workshop, on transboundary MPAs between Sweden and Denmark.

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- k) *assess the effectiveness of the management plans or measures of HELCOM MPAs by conducting monitoring, and where feasible scientific research programmes, which are directly connected to the conservation interests of HELCOM MPAs, including the placement of monitoring stations inside the MPAs (for those Contracting Parties which are also EU Member States this monitoring may be linked to the monitoring related to the implementation of relevant EU legislation)*
- This has been discussed in OSPAR and, due to lack of data and a clear methodology, an assessment of management plans has been done based on expert opinion.
  - The Meeting suggested further cooperation with OSPAR on this action and noted that sufficient data is needed for an analysis.
  - The Meeting noted that two different aspects are to be taken into account in an analysis: implementation and whether the management/measures are effective.
  - This action is not accomplished.
- l) *include HELCOM MPAs as areas of particular ecological significance in coastal and maritime spatial planning processes and incorporate their management provisions in spatial plans and Integrated Marine and Coastal Management Strategies, respectively*
- In Finland an analysis on the different types of conservation areas and how to take their diverse objectives into account in MSP has just started. The Meeting invited Finland to present the results to State and Conservation.
  - In Sweden the actual level on which species/habitats occur, have not been taken into account in MSP.
  - The Meeting suggested to replace the word “include” with “take into account” in the beginning of the paragraph.
  - The Meeting suggested the criteria for the action as in the excel file in the Annex to this document.
  - The Meeting suggested cooperation with the HELCOM VASAB MSP WG on this action.
- m) *update, when necessary, HELCOM MPA related guidelines and guiding documents in order to keep them in line with new knowledge and compatible with other international criteria, such as MSFD requirements, in particular those concerning spatial protection measures*
- This action is not accomplished.
- n) *apply the newest IUCN categorization system when describing the HELCOM MPAs in order to allow for global comparisons of regional networks*
- Finland has done this, not specifically for Natura 2000 areas or HELCOM MPAs, but for nationally protected areas.
  - How to nest the categories under different systems and how to deal with an area containing several categories were identified as major impediments to accomplishing this action.
  - The Meeting invited Finland to provide an example on a translation exercise of several IUCN categories between national and HELCOM MPAs.
  - The Meeting suggested cooperation between HELCOM and IUCN on this matter.
- o) *perform identification, designation and legal protection of HELCOM MPAs according to HELCOMs criteria and guidelines and base all management plans or measures on relevant HELCOM publications such as “Planning and management of Baltic Sea Protected Areas: guidelines and tools” (BSEP 105). For EU Member States the respective EU requirements and guidelines are regarded as adequate for designating and managing HELCOM MPAs*
- The Meeting noted that the guidelines are partially outdated, and that reviewing which parts are in need of updating would be relevant, taking into account of the ongoing process to update the BSAP.
  - The Secretariat will send all the guidelines to the MPA TG members and the members will agree on a best way forward for reviewing the guidelines in order to get an overview on how much work is needed to update them (whether to organize a workshop/online meeting etc.) before STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018. STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 will be asked to adopt the process.
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- p) *modernize the HELCOM MPAs database as agreed in the HELCOM 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration, taking into account and harmonizing with other similar databases*
- This action is accomplished and ongoing.
- q) *continuously report the most recent numerical and descriptive data on HELCOM MPAs to HELCOMs data systems (HELCOM MPA database, GIS based map and data service)*
- This action is accomplished and ongoing.
- r) *regularly assess the status and development of HELCOMs MPAs according to the time tables set by HELCOM and to ensure that the assessments are applicable for corresponding EU and global reporting*
- The EU and global (Habitats directive, MSFD etc.) reporting time tables provide guidance for a time interval for when the HELCOM assessments should be made.
  - The Meeting highlighted the need for increased communication, sharing of information and coordination between CPs to support reporting, as well as strategies for joint approaches on notifications, under the CBD and the possibility to use HELCOM as a platform for this.
  - The Meeting suggested that HELCOM Secretariat would be notified on relevant issues by CBD Secretariat and that Ms. Penina Blankett, as a focal point for the CBD matters, will take this further.

#### Review of actions under Recommendation 37/2 'Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List'

- The Meeting emphasized the need for a reporting system and data storage for this Recommendation.
  - The Meeting noted that in OSPAR the actions of several Recommendations haven been interpreted differently by different Contracting Parties, followed by discussion and clarification about the criteria. This problem has also been noticed regarding reporting on level of implementation of measures under HELCOM.
  - The Meeting noted that the intention is for several of the Recommendations will be included in assessment of the level of implementation of BSAP which is intended to support the update of the BSAP.
  - The Meeting reviewed the first paragraph of the Recommendation, amended the excel file containing the actions and criteria for the accomplishment and provided the following comments:
1. *Make an inventory of existing and planned national and regional conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans as well as other relevant programmes and measures for the protection of species which are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List including measures through habitat protection - and review by 2018 their effectiveness and, if necessary, define future protection needs, and based on these:*
    - 1.1. *Determine which additional activities are needed to mitigate the identified pressures and/or impacts and support the development or amendment of conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans for HELCOM threatened species. Where appropriate, the development could be carried out in cooperation with neighboring countries or relevant organizations,*

*Aim to implement such plans as soon as possible, and by 2021 at the latest.*

- The inventory under point 1 has been done.
- The Meeting noted the need to separate actions like this in the future for easier review of accomplishment.

### Finalization of the work

The Meeting did not have time to finalize the review of Recommendation 37/2, and agreed that [the excel document](#) including the actions and criteria will be placed on [a workspace](#) set up by the Secretariat and invited the Contracting Parties to provide comments, especially regarding the rest of the actions, directly to the document in the workspace. Comments to the document are requested **by 28 September 2018**.

The final outcome of the review of the two Recommendations will be considered by STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018.

The Meeting highlighted the need for HELCOM MPA TG to also cooperate with OSPAR ICG POSH in addition to ICG MPA.

## Annex 1 List of Participants

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