



Document title	Information on the outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings
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Background

This document contains extracts from the following recent HELCOM meetings which are of relevance for the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area:

- 48th meeting of the Heads of Delegation (HOD 48-2015) , held in Tallinn, Estonia, 10-11 June 2015;
- 3rd meeting of the Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II 3-2015), held in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 16-17 June 2015;
- 11th Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 11-2015), held on 19-20 May 2015 in Berlin, Germany.

Only the parts of relevance for WG Pressure are integrated. The complete outcomes are available in the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#).

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note and make use of the presented information as appropriate.

Outcomes of HOD 48 and other relevant meetings

HOD 48-2015

Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (Gear)

3.19 The Meeting noted that a workshop led by the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM) will be held on 28 October 2015 to finalize a proposal on topics in need of further regional coordination of measures and that the outcome will be included in the 'Joint HELCOM document on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures' that will be finalized by the end of this year. HELCOM Working Groups have been asked to provide technical input to the list of proposed topics, and Chairs of Working Groups will be invited to the Workshop.

Marine litter

3.1 The Meeting considered and endorsed the proposed Annex with regional actions and voluntary national actions as part of HELCOM Recommendation 36-1 "Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP ML)"

3.2 The Meeting agreed on the reporting formats and definitions to the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (Attachment 2 of document 3-1).

3.4 The Meeting highlighted the importance of leadership in making the agreed actions operational and in implementation of the Annex in general, and

- welcomed that Sweden and Poland have already offered to lead actions RL7 and RS5, and RL8, respectively;
- welcomed the information by Poland and WWF Poland that they are ready to lead the action on retrieval of the ghost nets from the Baltic Sea;
- welcomed the offer by Estonia to consider how they could contribute to actions RL11 and RL14;
- took note of the information by Germany that they are not in the position to offer a lead for any specific activities at this moment in time, but Germany does its best to try providing general support for the implementation of the Action Plan;
- took note that Finland is still considering if they can offer the leadership for any of the actions;
- took note that Denmark will carry out national investigation regarding microplastics.

3.5 The Meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to consider leading additional actions in the Annex and requested nomination of national contact points for different actions.

3.6 The Meeting emphasized the role of information exchange between OSPAR and HELCOM to coordinate activities on RAP ML implementation as well as took note of the information by EU regarding the relevant ongoing activities at the European level, including on microplastics.

3.8 The Meeting noted that PRESSURE 3-2015 is planned to devote part of its meeting to marine litter, among other topics, which will be an opportunity to look into the implementation plan for the RAP ML.

Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (Pressure)

3.24 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the Second Meeting of the Pressure Working Group (doc. 3-5) presented by the Chair of the group Mr. Lars Sonesten.

3.29 The Meeting approved arranging PRESSURE 4-2016 in the period 18-21 April 2016 (in Sweden).

3.30 The Meeting agreed in general on the approach to the future production of PLC data and assessment products so that they are timely and complementary to each other and meet policy needs (doc. 3-2) with the understanding that the frequency of assessment products is still an open issue. The Meeting took note of the view by Germany that less frequent MAI/CART assessments are preferred by Germany. The Meeting noted that the Pressure WG will continue discussing the target year for PLC-7 in its next meeting.

3.32 The Meeting noted that the Pressure WG has started the work to establish more clear and effective processes, with timelines, for elaboration of PLC products, including procedures for releasing the reported PLC-water data and accepting the filled in and consolidated dataset, with the aim to better synchronize and time future PLC work. The Meeting supported future systematic work on developing standard regular procedures of the Pollution Load Compilation for efficient use of resources, and adjusting working arrangements as the work on the PLC database within the PLUS project is progressing.

3.42 The Meeting considered the project proposal to operationalize the MAI-CART follow-up assessments (documents 3-3 and 3-29) and agreed on the future operationalization in principle. The Meeting supported the presented Scenario 2 for the operationalization (automation when feasible and as far as possible) as it has the benefit of providing access to the tools by all Contracting Parties, possibly to be implemented in phases.

Underwater noise

3.44 The Meeting considered the proposed work plan on preparing a roadmap to building a knowledge base on underwater noise (doc. 3-6).

3.46 The Meeting agreed on the work plan, however, decided that it should be amended so the focus should be given first to the work on monitoring, review of existing knowledge and investigating the significance of difference sources of noise as well as HELCOM indicators, while the work on mitigation options and environmental targets should be started with preparing an overview of measures in IMO, OSPAR and other relevant forums. The Meeting requested the roadmap to be presented to Pressure, Maritime and State&Conservation groups with a view of endorsing it at the HOD 49-2015 meeting in December 2015.

Pharmaceuticals

3.48 The Meeting took note of and supported the new initiative to prepare the regional status report regarding pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea (doc. 3-12) as a joint activity between HELCOM and EUSBSR PA Hazards.

3.49 The Meeting took note of the information by Denmark regarding ongoing studies on the contamination of the environment by medical substances. The Meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to contribute to the preparation of the regional status report on pharmaceuticals.

Core indicators

3.54 The Meeting considered the core indicator GES-boundary adoption and agreement on further development on the set of indicators (doc. 3-17 and 3-17-Corr.1) as well as the summary of GES-boundaries recommended for adoption (doc. 3-26).

3.55 The Meeting welcomed the work done in the CORESET II project, and noted the technical review of the State and Conservation Group, and the recommendation from Gear Group on the further development and use of core indicators.

3.56 In this respect, the European Union pointed out that any agreement that the EU delegation will give within the context of HELCOM is formally without prejudice to the European Commission's role under the EU Treaty to assess the implementation and compliance of EU Member States with EU law and the assessments that the European Commission is required to make in accordance with Articles 12 and 16 MSFD after EU Member States have officially reported to the European Commission.

3.57 The Meeting took note that Estonia lifted the study reservation on the indicator on 'Trends in arrival of new non-indigenous species'.

3.58 The Meeting took note that Finland lifted the study reservation on using secondary GES-boundaries for hazardous substance indicators. Finland informed that they could not accept that the GES boundary for ringed seals distribution is based on ice coverage as presented to State and Conservation 2-2015 where it was agreed that the issue will require future expert work. The position of Finland on this indicator will depend on the outcome of ongoing consultation among experts.

3.59 The Meeting took note that Denmark will carry out an interministerial coordination process during 2015 regarding core indicators and GES boundaries and that the Danish study reservation remains until this process is completed by end of the year. Denmark pointed out that this should not hinder the ongoing work and development of assessment tools in the HOLAS II project.

3.60 The Meeting took note that in Germany a national meeting to discuss core indicators and GES boundaries will be held in the end of June and that Germany aims at clarifying their general and specific study reservations based on this meeting and by the end of July. The Meeting noted that Germany will provide detailed comments on a number of indicators and requested the Secretariat to ensure that proposed changes are communicated to relevant experts from the Contracting Parties.

3.61 The Meeting recalled the view of Germany that bio-effect indicators should be considered as supplementary indicators.

3.62 The Meeting noted the view of Sweden to give priority to the further development of indicators related to benthic- and pelagic habitats and to consider the interactions within and between the ecosystem components of these two habitats.

3.63 Taking note of the study reservations from Denmark and Germany, the Meeting agreed on indicators and GES- boundaries and further development of the set of indicators as contained in **Annex 4** to this Outcome, including their use in HOLAS II assessment according to the recommendation by the Gear Group (document 3-17), and the publication of agreed core indicator reports at the HELCOM website as they become ready for publishing.

3.64 The Meeting considered and agreed that the further indicator development in HELCOM (doc. 3-13 and 3-21) will be based on a Lead Country approach and appointed national experts and that the development should be taken forward using HELCOM expert groups, projects and networks as a platform for the development of the indicators. The Contracting Parties were invited to inform the Secretariat on their possibility to take on the lead or co-lead in the indicator development and to appoint national experts **by 30 June 2015**, also including any confirmation of the same experts continuation as in CORESET II.

3.65 The Meeting requested HELCOM groups, projects and networks to prioritize their role as platform for development of indicators and providers of support for HELCOM assessments and to make arrangements for the work as necessary. The Meeting noted that to improve communication on a national level, information on the ongoing work and tasks of the groups in HELCOM would be useful.

3.66 The Meeting agreed to establish a new HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances. The Meeting agreed to seek opportunities for cooperation with OSPAR as well as to investigate the possibility for a project related to hazardous substances in cooperation with the EUSBSR PA Hazards.

3.67 The Meeting requested nominations of experts to the hazardous substances network as well as expert contacts on underwater noise and birds and update the list of contacts of HELCOM Groups as indicated in document 3-21.

BSAP follow-up

3.100 The Meeting considered the follow-up system for HELCOM agreements (doc. 3-27) and noted that actions related to State and Conservation, Pressure and Response Group have already been reviewed and supported by these Working Groups and for other Groups the review has been initiated to be finalized in September 2015.

3.103 The Meeting requested the next meeting of the Gear Group to consider the updated proposal based on the comments from Contracting Parties.

3.104 The Meeting stressed the importance of communication of results and noted that the Secretariat will present a proposal for presentation of results to HOD 49-2015.

Next meetings

6.2 The Meeting took note of the suggestion by the Executive Secretary to focus a possible Stakeholder Conference in March next year on marine litter and invited the Heads of Delegation to consider the proposal.

GEAR 11-2015

Programmes of Measures

3.1. The Meeting noted that the Overview of possible national measures made available as an attachment to meeting document 2-1 to GEAR 10-2015 is still valid since no new information on national measures has been received.

3.2. The Meeting took note of the presentation by Andrea Weiss, Chair of the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM), on the background paper with initial ideas for a workshop to elaborate proposed issues for regional coordination of measures (document 3-4)

3.3. The Meeting recalled from Gear 10-2015 that the purpose of such workshop was to develop a plan for further coordination of national measures and the development of regional measures and joint actions with the view of including the plan in the 'Joint document of regional coordination of PoMs' by end of 2015.

3.4. The Meeting discussed the current state of development of national programmes of measures and concluded that it is too early to convene a HELCOM workshop since many countries are still in the process of developing national PoMs. The Meeting instead agreed to convene a one day IG PoM workshop on 28 October 2015, back-to-back to the next meeting of HELCOM Gear (paragraph 6.2), with the aim to finalize the drafting needed for including a proposal on topics for future regional coordination in the Joint document on PoMs.

3.5. The Meeting agreed that IG PoM will prepare for the workshop, based on the proposed national programmes of measures and the input requested from HELCOM Working Groups as agreed at Gear 10-2015 (para 2.28). All themes outlined as topics in need of further regional coordination by Gear (Gear 10-2015, document 2-1, Annex 2) will be considered in the preparatory phase while a possible selection of topics for the workshop will be made based on input from HELCOM Working Groups. Chairs of HELCOM Working Groups will be invited to the workshop.

3.6. The Meeting agreed that IG PoM will convene an on-line meeting in June 2015, date to be agreed, to make plans for the preparation of the workshop and that a second meeting of IG PoM is envisaged by end of September to make detailed planning at which time updated information on proposed national PoMs will be available. Gear invited Contracting Parties to provide updated information on their national measures by end of August to prepare for the workshop.

3.7. The Meeting agreed that the issue of exceptions under MSFD Article 14 will be discussed by IG PoM to provide input for further discussion at GEAR 12-2015.

3.8. The Meeting took note and welcomed the input from the Pressure Group to the regional coordination of measures related to inputs of nutrients, marine litter and underwater noise (document 3-2) as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting took note that the information on remaining load reductions of Finland does not take into account Finland's foot note in the 2013 Ministerial Declaration which indicates that load reductions in sub-basins other than Gulf of Finland can be taken into account although the reduction target has been set for Gulf of Finland and that this information needs to be corrected.

3.9. The Meeting welcomed that Germany and Finland will provide updated information to Annex 1 on expected nutrient reductions resulting from implementation of existing policies / new measures as soon as possible. The Meeting invited the remaining Contracting Parties to provide such information to Annex 1 as far as available.

3.10. The Meeting further noted that the next meeting of Pressure Group plans to provide input regarding inputs of hazardous substances to the regional coordination of measures.

3.11. The Meeting took note of the initial discussion on input on regional coordination of measures at State and Conservation 2-2015 and that some of the proposed topics for further regional coordination is already considered on the work plan of the Working Group. A Lead Country approach will be taken to develop the requested input to the workshop.

3.12. The Meeting decided to discuss the next cycle of implementation of the ecosystem approach (document 3-3), based on experiences gained so far, at the next meeting of the group. The Meeting was of the view that an informal format for the discussion for this initial exchange of experiences and perspectives might be most suitable.

Activities of relevant HELCOM projects and processes

4.14. The Meeting supported the establishment of a HELCOM network of hazardous substances experts and invited Contracting Parties to nominate experts to this network **by 30 June 2015** (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi). The Meeting requested the Secretariat to provide a list of experts nominated to previous HELCOM projects on hazardous substances to facilitate the nomination. The Meeting proposed that the new network should look into possibilities of cooperate with OSPAR.

HOLAS II 3-2015

Data sets on pressures and human activities

4.3 The Meeting supported that the HELCOM working groups should be involved in preparing pressure layers and that pressure data should be used from verified data sources as far as possible. In the case new data layers need to be compiled, it was proposed that this is done in a structured way, with the use a common reporting format.

4.4 The Meeting was of the opinion that a spatial data layer showing the internal loading of phosphorous in the sediments could be relevant to present and discussed how such information could be derived from the available data. The information would need to be presented in an appropriate context as the MAI core indicator already takes internal loading into account.

4.5 The Meeting discussed the relevance of human activities and pressures for HOLAS II (Table 2 and 3 document 4-1) and revised the list accordingly (**Annex 2**).

4.7 The Meeting tasked the Secretariat to update the table on human activities and pressures, as far as known, with information indicating if the data layer is existing or otherwise planned to be compiled, or if a separate attempt would have to be made for data collection, to guide further prioritization by the Contracting Parties.

Further development of the HELCOM pressure and impact indices

4.8 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Lena Bergström, on the further development of the Baltic Sea pressure and impact indices in HOLAS II (document 4-2, **Presentation 7**).

4.12 The Meeting agreed that the preferred approach to take the development of pressure- and impact indices further is to organize for support of a group of dedicated experts to take active part.

4.13 The Meeting considered and agreed on the proposed activities in the HOLAS II roadmap (**Annex 3**), including a workshop to support the development of the pressure and impact indices, perform test runs based on available data layers and provide detailed guidance and draft descriptions of the assessments to be carried out preferably in the fourth quarter of 2015.

4.14 The Meeting was of the opinion that an inventory list of data layers on ecosystem components should be compiled before the workshop.

6.2 The Meeting agreed that the workshop on the development of the pressure and impact indices would be arranged in the second half of October 2015, with preliminary dates of **20-21 October 2015**, and reiterated that there will be a second workshop on the biodiversity assessment tool late in 2015 as well as a workshop on the socio-economic aspects in the third quarter of 2015, preliminary dates of **30 September to 1 October 2015**.