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Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

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Background

According to HELCOM Recommendation 35/1 'System of Coastal and Marine Baltic Sea Protected Areas (HELCOM MPAs)', the management plans of MPAs are updated when necessary and in accordance with other legal requirements with a maximum of 12 years intervals.

In STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018, the Contracting Parties agreed to provide information on national frequency of review and/or update of management plans to State and Conservation 10-2019, using templates that the Secretariat would provide.

A draft questionnaire was prepared by the Secretariat and presented to MPA TG 8-2019 meeting for review and input. The meeting commented the draft survey and agreed that further comments to the questionnaire were to be sent to the secretariat by 25 January. The survey was amended with received comments, and sent out to State and Conservation on 1 January 2019.

This document presents a summary of received responses. The full responses are provided in Att. 1.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Responses to survey on review and update frequency of national MPA management plans

Altogether 14 responses to the survey were received from Estonia (2), Finland (1), Germany¹ (1), Latvia (1), Poland (1) and Sweden (8). Most Contracting Parties responded regarding HELCOM MPAs that were designated under the Natura 2000 framework. Sweden responded also regarding MPAs designated under the framework of national conservation areas and those designated directly as HELCOM MPAs. Estonia also provided responses regarding MPAs designated under national conservation areas. Poland responded for HELCOM MPAs that are at the same time Natura 2000 areas and some also national parks.

Management measures in place

Based on the responses management plans, other measures, or both were mostly in place for HELCOM MPAs designated under different frameworks (Table 1). For HELCOM MPAs designated under Natura 2000, management plans are in place in Latvia and in part of the MPAs in Estonia, Finland and Sweden. For HELCOM MPAs designated under national conservation legislation (not directly related to N2000 areas), management plans are in place in Estonia and Sweden. Part of the areas designated directly as HELCOM MPAs in Sweden have management plans.

Table 1. Management measures in place in HELCOM MPAs designated under different frameworks.

Framework	Contracting Party	Management measures in place
Natura 2000	Estonia	Some areas are partly covered by management plans, and for other parts, the restrictions from national law apply
	Finland	Not all HELCOM MPAs have management plans at the moment
	Germany	Yes, other measures than management plans
	Latvia	Yes, both management plans and other measures
	Poland	Yes, other measures than management plans
	Sweden	Yes, management plans or other measures than management plans
National conservation areas	Estonia	Yes, management plans
	Poland	Yes, other measures than management plans
	Sweden	Yes, management plans
Directly as HELCOM MPA	Sweden	Not all HELCOM MPAs have management plans, some have both management plans and other measures

National catalysts for initiating a review of MPA management plans

The management plans of HELCOM MPAs designated under the Natura 2000 framework are updated periodically based on a set schedule in Estonia, Germany and Poland (Table 2). Finland and Latvia have no set structure or guidance for when the reviews should take place, and in Sweden the review process can be periodic, initiated episodically when predefined conditions are met or without set structure or guidance for when review should take place.

¹ This answer is for the HELCOM MPAs in the German EEZ only, where Management plans are still under preparation, but there already exist protected area ordinances with a list of regulations for all three MPAs in the German EEZ of the Baltic Sea.

The management plans for HELCOM MPAs designated under national conservation legislation are updated periodically in Estonia and Poland, whereas in Sweden there is no set structure or guidance for when reviews should take place.

Management plans for areas that have been directly designated as HELCOM MPAs in Sweden are updated periodically or there is no set structure or guidance for when reviews should take place.

Table 2. National catalyst for initiating review of MPA management plans in HELCOM MPAs designated under different frameworks.

Framework	Contracting Party	Catalyst for initiating a review of MPA management plans
Natura 2000	Estonia	Periodic (reviews are initiated based on a set schedule)
	Finland	There is no set structure/guidance for when reviews should take place
	Germany	Periodic (reviews are initiated based on a set schedule)
	Latvia	There is no set structure/guidance for when reviews should take place
	Poland	Periodic (reviews are initiated based on a set schedule)
	Sweden	Periodic, episodic or no set structure or guidance for when reviews should take place
National conservation areas	Estonia	Periodic (reviews are initiated based on a set schedule)
	Poland	Periodic (reviews are initiated based on a set schedule)
	Sweden	There is no set structure/guidance for when reviews should take place
Directly as HELCOM MPA	Sweden	Periodic, or no set structure or guidance for when reviews should take place

Frequency and systems used for reviewing the MPA management plans

The most commonly used system for reviewing the management plans is to review the plans after a preset period (Table 3). The cycle usually varies from 5 – 20 years.

In Poland and Sweden, the review of a management plan may also be initiated when a new threat/pressure is identified or when new information comes to light on species or habitats that require different management. Similarly, in Finland, the review of a management plan may be initiated when there are changes in human activities affecting the area or changes in the state of the key natural features.

In Germany, the reporting is done according to Habitats Directive. Latvia noted that in Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000 all Natura 2000 sites are evaluated to indicate priority areas where management plans must be developed or updated, and the marine areas have the same criteria. In Sweden, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water management may give directions to review management plans of Natura 2000 areas. In Poland, a change in social circumstances may also initiate the review process.

Table 3. Systems used for reviewing the MPA management plans in HELCOM MPAs designated under different frameworks.

Framework	CP	Period	Catalyst for initiating a review of MPA management plans
Natura 2000	Estonia	~ 10-20	Plans have a "BBF"-date, after which they are supposed to be reviewed
	Finland	varying	Continuous phased review system ¹ and Simultaneous systematic review system ²
	Germany	6	All every six years.
	Latvia		Episodic ³ or individual episodic ⁴ review system prompted by predefined criteria. review for all provided each year, analysing plans that will expire.
	Poland	20	Management plans are prepared for 20 years. They are reviewed when the deadline comes or earlier when its necessary, e.g. environmental or social circumstances influencing the plan have changed
	Sweden	6-12 or not defined	Simultaneous systematic review system ² , Episodic review system ³ prompted by predefined criteria, or no set system or guidance for structuring the review of the MPA management plans
National conservation areas	Estonia	usually 5-7	Individual episodic ⁴ review system prompted by predefined criteria. Plans have a period, after which they will be reviewed.
	Poland	20	Plans are prepared for 20 years. They are reviewed when the deadline comes or earlier when its necessary, e.g. environmental or social circumstances influencing the plan have changed
	Sweden	10-20 or not yet defined	Individual episodic ⁴ review system prompted by predefined criteria or no set system or guidance for structuring the review of the MPA management plans.
Directly as HELCOM MPA	Sweden	10 or not defined	Individual episodic ⁴ review system prompted by predefined criteria, or controlled by 10-year cycle, for some MPAs overlapping N2000 sites, there is management plan only for the N2000

¹ each year a given number of plans are reviewed until all plans have been through the process, after which the review starts over

² all plans are reviewed simultaneously at scheduled intervals, with a gap of limited activity between reviews processes

³ all national MPA management plans come under review when predefined criteria are met

⁴ an individual MPA's management plan comes under review when that specific management plan meets the criteria

Parameters against which the plans are reviewed

The reported parameters against which the management plans are reviewed were the following:

HELCOM MPAs designated under Natura 2000 framework:

- Conservation goals
- Actual elements to be protected, current and potential threats, new methods of protection
- State of key nature values, pressures and management needs
- According to the national legislation, the new plan must be developed - it means, all chapters must be reviewed, including management activities

- adding new knowledge collected since last update
- Still to be elaborated

HELCOM MPAs designated under national conservation framework:

- If the management and regulations fulfill the objective of the MPA and its natural values
- State of conservation and need of changed management to preserve the conservation objectives.
- Actual elements to be protected, current and potential threats, new methods of protection
- Reviewed as whole, with no definite set of parameters

Areas designated directly as HELCOM MPAs:

- HELCOM guidelines
- Biological, marine litter, boat traffic, tourism
- Different priorities (financials, new data)

Actors reviewing the management plans

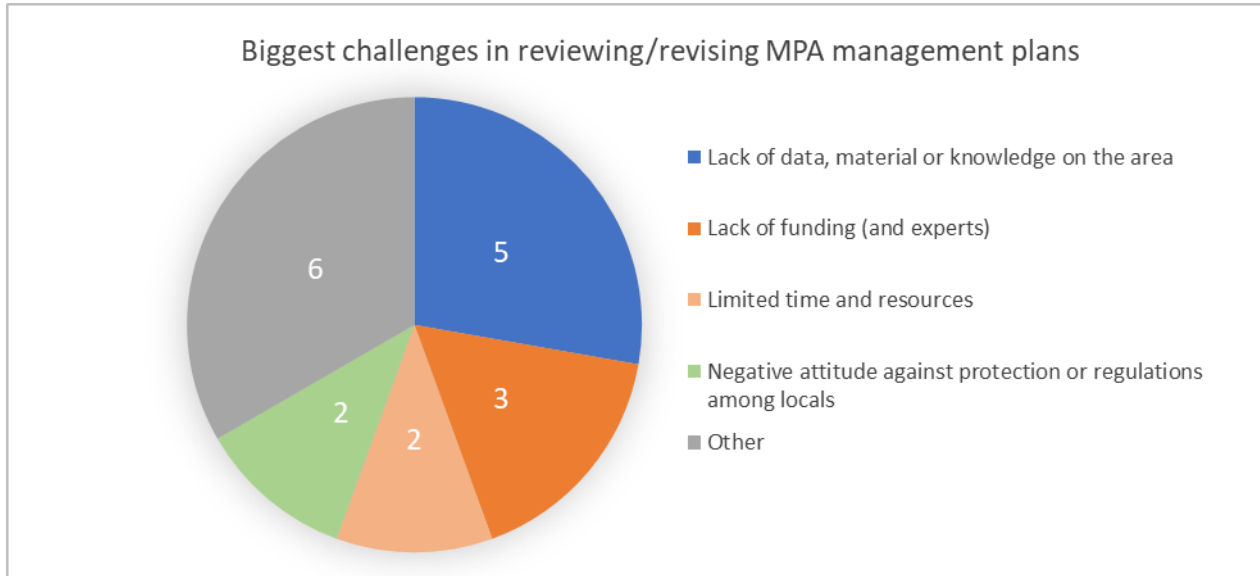
The management plans of HELCOM MPAs designated under the Natura 2000 framework are mainly reviewed by national agencies. In Sweden, part of them are reviewed by national managers. In Poland, local managers are responsible for preparing draft plans, and help of consultants, external experts etc. can be used. In the end, the plan is approved by the national body.

The management plans of HELCOM MPAs designated under the national conservation framework are in Sweden reviewed by local managers in Estonia by national agencies which can also decide to authorize the reviewing to an external independent expert or consultant. The areas designated directly as HELCOM MPAs in Sweden can be reviewed by local managers, national agencies or external consultants.

Biggest challenges in reviewing or revising MPA management plans

Lack of data, material or knowledge on the area were identified in 5 out of 14 responses among the biggest challenges in reviewing or revising MPA management plans (Fig 1). Also lack of resources were mentioned in 5 responses: Lack of time and resources were identified in two responses and lack of funding was identified in three responses, two of which also identified lack of experts. Negative attitude against regulations was mentioned in two responses. The following challenges were mentioned once: Lack of national guidance, dependence of trends in the MPA of the actions outside the area, limited means of protection, difficulties in informing all MPA users, assessment of management effectiveness and evaluating necessary activities set in management plan, knowing that these plans are not actively implemented.

Figure 1. Biggest challenges when reviewing or revising MPA management plans. Pie chart shows how many times each challenge was mentioned in the total of 14 responses. One response could include more than one challenge. 'Other' includes lack of national guidance, dependence of trends in the MPA of the actions outside the area, limited means of protection, difficulties in informing all MPA users, assessment of management effectiveness and evaluating necessary activities set in management plan, knowing that these plans are not actively implemented.



Suggestions for developing and coordinating the process in the future

Funding was mentioned in four answers (BOX 1). Funding is needed for e.g. lead the process forward and for inventories to improve the availability of data and knowledge. In answers from Sweden, better national coordination and international coordination and collaboration were suggested. Furthering the process was also noted to need (national) guidance, such as guidelines for government organizations to do regular follow-ups on protected areas and management plans. National legislation should be taken into account regarding development of management plans.

BOX 1. Provided suggestions for developing and coordinating the process in future

- SWAM should coordinate and allocate resources in Sweden.
- If people in the areas find there's benefits (money?) with a protection it would be a big help for us.
- National guidance and finance for leading the process forward.
- Clearly better national coordination between authorities is needed to start with, also international coordination. It also must be possible to inform more about relevant regulations in a MPA on the sea charts/navigation charts.
- Facilitate international collaboration between local/regional conservation managers, e.g. organizing seminars and workshops.
- Better structure and national coordination for reviewing the plans, and more resources allocated to inventories so knowledge/data can be made available
- National guidelines for government organizations to do regular follow-ups on protected areas and management plans. This would include assessing their functioning and effectiveness in reaching the goal/purpose of the site. Coordinated by an overhead state organization.
- Criteria are needed in order to prioritize planning needs. Discussion and guidance on what kind of planning is needed, so that an MPA can be considered being managed. Is a participatory management plan always needed?
- The national legislation regarding management plan development must be taken into account developing guidelines or recommendations. Otherwise due to national strict legislation it will be not possible to approve the management plan which is not developed accordingly to the national legislation
- Provide necessary funds.

Resources needed to improve the current national approach

Finland and Sweden responded that more time, personnel and funds are needed and Germany that more personnel is needed for improving the current national approach. In responses from Sweden the needed work was estimated to be 3 – 6 months of full-time work, depending on the region. Estonia noted that estimation of the needed resources requires further detailed analyses. Poland noted that no changes in national approach are considered at the moment. Latvia noted that if different approach from Natura 2000s must be developed for HELCOM MPAs, new national legal acts must be developed, and the legislation will not be approved if the number of MPAs in Latvia is less than 10.

Coordination of efforts with other countries.

Most responders saw that collaboration or coordination of efforts with other countries would support the work. Coordination or collaboration was seen to support the work e.g. in transboundary areas and in unifying the conservation methods between countries to ensure achieving the overall goals (BOX 2). It was also seen beneficial to exchange knowledge, ideas, experiences and best practices. Only Germany and Latvia did not see an added value in coordination of efforts with other countries. Latvia noted that currently it is not useful to develop management plans for MPAs, if there is no efforts, budget and interest to implement these plans.

BOX 2. Responses on the way the coordination and collaboration between countries can support the work

Sweden (areas designated directly as HELCOM MPAs)

- I believe collaboration between countries in the Baltic basin is the best for future marine protection. In Stockholm we would for example have a close dialogue towards the archipelago in Åland.

- International coordination (for example between Finland and Sweden) could improve and increase the work with MPAs. We should learn from each other and use each others knowledge and science in different biotopes.

Sweden (MPAs designated under national conservation framework)

- Because the users come from everywhere, therefore we have to spread information everywhere, and we all have to have a basic and common perception of different natural values, the importance of protection and so on. By a higher degree of collaboration we can also learn from each other.

Sweden (MPAs designated under Natura 2000 framework)

- Sharing of knowledge and learning from neighbor country which shares the same marine environment is always beneficial.
- Seeing as aquatic organisms do not share our human boundaries between countries, the same conservation measures should be used to ensure the overall goal is met. For example, forbidding certain fishing methods has been found to be very effective but then that must be applied to all important fragile catchment areas in the Baltic Sea. In that way, these larger areas that stretch over parts of the entire Baltic sea can supply the remaining areas with population numbers, also increasing the genetic diversity.

Estonia (MPAs designated under national conservation framework)

- Exchange of best practices could be useful.

Estonia (MPAs designated under Natura 2000 framework)

- It might be useful to exchange ideas and experiences with other countries on the matter.

Poland (MPAs designated under Natura 2000 framework and national conservation areas)

- Mostly in regard to transboundary areas with the same or similar elements protected and common threats