Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation

Hamina, Finland, 6-10 May 2019

STATE & CONSERVATION 10-2019

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Background

The HELCOM ACTION project (ACTIONS TO EVALUATE AND IDENTIFY EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO REACH GES IN THE BALTIC SEA MARINE REGION) is a HELCOM coordinated project that is co-financed by the EU. The project runs from January 2019 to December 2020. The project is designed to contribute to the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021 and can also be used by HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States in updating and implementing their MSFD Programme of Measures.

The project will evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures, focusing on: by-catch of mammals and birds, impacts on the seabed, marine protected areas as a measure to protect the Baltic Sea, and eutrophication. These topics have been chosen based on identified priorities in the region, for example some of the main pressures on the Baltic Sea ecosystem identified in the HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report. In addition, the project will analyse the natural conditions that influence the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Baltic Sea region, including impacts of projected changes in climate. Furthermore, the project will develop an approach for a regional analysis of sufficiency of measures (SOM) to identify potential gaps in achieving GES, and estimate cost-effectiveness of tentative new measures to fill these gaps. To analyze sufficiency of measures is one of the HELCOM activities agreed through the Strategic plan for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (HOD 54-2018). The SOM analyses will be carried joint and in coordination by the HELCOM ACTION project and the HELCOM platform for analyzing sufficiency of measures (SOM Platform), established by HOD 55-2018. A separate document on the approach for analyzing sufficiency of measure will be submitted later.

HELCOM Working Groups will guide the activities and review the results of the ACTION project which are aimed at supporting the agreement on new or strengthened HELCOM actions. Of particular relevance to the State and Conservation Group is 1) work package 2 that will evaluate measures to reduce impact of human activities on seabed habitats, including from fisheries, 2) work package 3 that addresses marine protected areas, and 3) work package 5 that will evaluate how the characteristics of the Baltic Sea influences the time required to reach good status. The project kick-off meeting was held on 25-27 February, 2019, involving detailed project and within-work package planning. The inception report, submitted to the funding body on 8 March 2019, was the major product from this workshop. The inception report summarizes the overall project and approach and details the methods to be applied under each work package. The inception report is freely available at the project website, hosted on the HELCOM webpage. This document contains a brief overview of project activities and the structure of the project coordination.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information provided in the HELCOM ACTION project inception report.

Organization and coordination of the HELCOM ACTION project

The HELCOM ACTION project will be carried out through seven work packages covering the following topics (Figure 1) (for further details, see inception report):

WP1 By-catch: identifying high-risk areas for by-catch of mammals and birds, evaluating technical measures to reduce by-catch of harbour porpoise, estimating the effect and cost of these mitigation measures.

Partners in WP1: National Institute for Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua, Denmark – Lead partner), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU, Sweden), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwaM, Sweden), Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE, Finland), HELCOM.

WP2 Impacts on the seabed: evaluating restoration measures in coastal areas and impacts of spatial regulation of offshore fisheries, including effects on benthic communities and costs of measures.

Partners in WP2: Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE, Finland – Lead partner), National Institute for Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua, Denmark), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU, Sweden), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwaM, Sweden), HELCOM.

WP3 Marine protected areas (MPAs): developing a method to assess management effectiveness of MPAs, assessing how MPAs contribute to achieving GES in the Baltic Sea.

Partners in WP3: Klaipeda University (KU, Lithuania – Lead partner), University of Tartu (UT, Estonia), Aarhus University (AU, Denmark), Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE, Finland), HELCOM.

WP4 Input of nutrients: analysing sources and trends of nutrient input and compatibility of nutrient reduction targets under different policies, evaluating the combined effect of existing measures.

Partners in WP4: Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwaM, Sweden - Lead partner), Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE, Finland), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU, Sweden), Tallinn University of Technology (TTU, Estonia), Aarhus University (AU, Denmark), HELCOM.

WP5 Conditions that influence GES: analysing the conditions of the Baltic Sea that influence achievement of GES, including climate change.

Partners in WP5: Tallinn University of Technology (TTU, Estonia), Aarhus University (AU, Denmark), HELCOM.

WP6 Sufficiency of measures: developing an approach to assess the sufficiency of existing measures to achieve GES, implementing the approach for selected topics, identifying the need for new measures, estimating cost-effectiveness of tentative new measures.

Partners in WP6: Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE, Finland – Lead partner), Klaipeda University (KU, Lithuania), National Institute for Aquatic Resources – (DTU Aqua, Denmark), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU, Sweden), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwaM, Sweden), Tallinn University of Technology (TTU, Estonia), University of Tartu (TU, Estonia), Aarhus University (AU, Denmark), HELCOM.

WP7: Policy-project interphase: ensuring guidance from and timely contribution to the BSAP update process and the preparation of MSFD PoMs.

Partner: HELCOM – Lead partner, All partners

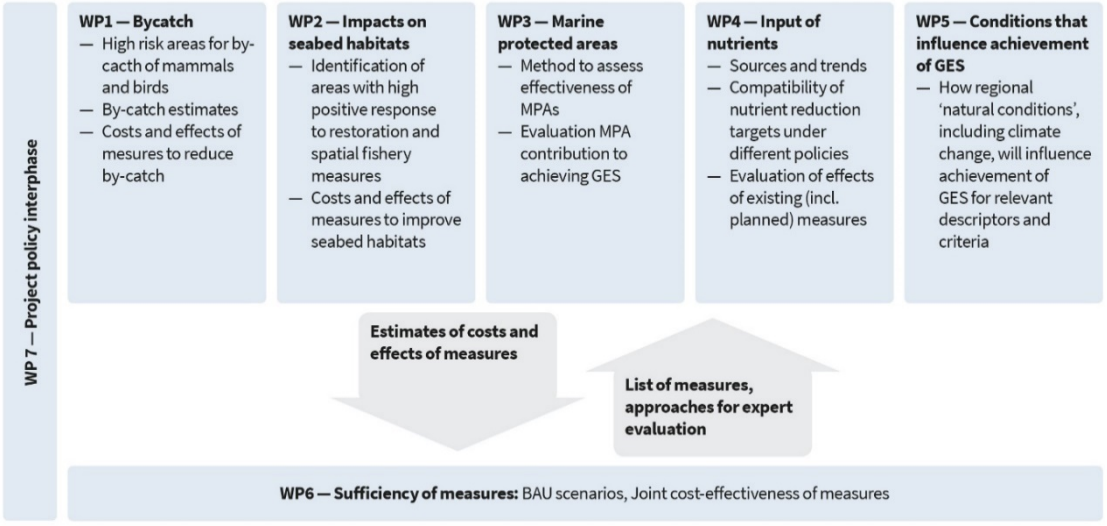

Figure 1. Linkages between work packages in the HELCOM ACTION project.

Project management

The project will be carried out by a team consisting of the HELCOM Secretariat and the eight additional partners.

The HELCOM Secretariat will act as overall coordinator of the project activities, contribute to the work carried out as specified in the application, and ensure effective and timely communication and monitoring of progress with relevant HELCOM Working Groups and projects.

The ACTION project will be guided through the existing working arrangement in HELCOM (see Figure 2). This includes guidance from the Working Groups HELCOM GEAR, State & Conservation, Pressure, Fish and Agri, each consisting of officially nominated representatives of the Baltic Sea countries and the EU. Competent authorities in the Baltic Sea countries as well as the European Commission will thus act as an advisory board to the project and will be able to oversee that the project follows the agreed priorities and that it remains relevant for national work and requirements of the MSFD. Regular reporting to and review by HELCOM Working Groups also forms the quality control of the project. The project will also be closely linked to the BSAP update process in HELCOM involving all Contracting Parties.

Figure 2. Management and supervision of the ACTION project.

HELCOM Working Groups to guide the project:

- AGRI: Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices, focuses on reducing input of nutrient through development and application of sustainable agricultural practices.
- FISH: Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries, deals with fisheries in relation to the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach.
- GEAR: HELCOM Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, works towards region-wide co-operation on all elements of national marine strategies.
- PRESSURE: Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area, provides the necessary technical basis to HELCOM work on inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances.
- STATE&CONSERVATION: Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation, covers monitoring and assessment functions as well as issues related to nature conservation and biodiversity protection.

HELCOM expert networks and projects to be consulted in the project:

- ESA EN: HELCOM expert network on economic and social analyses (ESA) works to enhance regional collaboration to produce comparable information on the economic and social aspects of the Baltic Sea marine environment.
- EN-DREDS: supports reporting and validation of data on dredging/depositing operations at sea and facilitates the work of the Pressure Group in terms of assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea.
- CG FISHDATA: HELCOM Correspondence Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation.
- MPA Task Group: Group of national representatives that is activated ad hoc to support HELCOM work on marine protected areas.

- PLC project: Project that regularly compiles of pollution load data (PLC), focusing on annual and periodic assessments of inputs of nutrient and hazardous substances.

The links between project activities and HELCOM subsidiary bodies will be as follows.

- WP 1: FISH and CG FISHDATA
- WP 2: STATE&CONSERVATION, FISH, PRESSURE, EN-DREDS
- WP 3: STATE&CONSERVATION, MPA Task Group
- WP 4: PRESSURE, AGRI, PLC project
- WP 5: GEAR, STATE&CONSERVATION
- WP 6: GEAR, ESA EN
- WP 7: GEAR