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Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

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Background

This document contains report on progress of the [HELCOM Blues project](#) Activity 5 (Data accessibility) tasks carried out during 2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Progress HELCOM Blues project data activities

Task 5.1 Improving capacity for biodiversity data reporting

Subtask 5.1.1 Further develop BioBase to incorporate count information

Reporting format for mobile species abundance and distribution was developed in collaboration with the HELCOM BLUES activity 2 team (biodiversity topic), as well as indicator leads and included in [HOLAS III data call](#). Data conversion and harmonisation needs of specific topics and regional harmonisation were utilised wherever possible. The reporting format and guidance was developed to include haul-out specific counts and possibility to aggregate haul-out sites in to haul-units as requested by experts and to be in line with similar OSPAR format. The suggested improvements of biodiversity database were presented in EG MAMA meeting (Document 2-7) and will be further discussed in intersessional meetings in October, looking into agreeing on proper granularity (point wise vs gridded location) of haul-out sites to be reported by HELCOM Contracting Parties for HOLAS III and on the aggregation of counts to HELCOM subbasin level. Acoustic data for harbour porpoise monitoring will also be included in the future updates of the Biodiversity database.

The database web application and quality control tools for including new data update will be carried out closer to end of 2021 and beginning of 2022 after data model updates have been implemented to the underlying database.

Subtask 5.1.2. At sea seabird data

Bird count format was developed together with the guidance of indicator leads and included in HOLAS III data call as in HOLAS II, due to specific indicator requirements stemming from utilized assessment script/software included in HOLAS III data call and based on ESAS offshore count format. Count data will be transferred to Biodiversity data model (Darwin Core) and added in HELCOM Biodiversity database for HOLAS III availability. Data processing tools (QC, automatization) will also be added as stated in the subtask.

5.2 Provisioning external data products for assessments

Task 5.2 started with defining the fishing effort data requirements (VMS and logbook data) for cumulative impact assessment and other purposes (e.g. bycatch estimation and for CumI indicator). The Fishing effort and intensity maps, will be made publicly available and downloadable set of data products (maps) at the end of the project and in consideration of the needs of the HOLAS III timeline.

Aligning data needs of bycatch and CumI indicator as well as BSII was taken into account during the process. Advice request specification in Annex 1. Advice request contract was signed with ICES in June 2021 and data will be delivered to HELCOM by June 2022. To start some preliminary work for some of the topics within HELCOM BLUES and to support work on HOLAS III for developing bycatch indicators, fishing effort data were obtained from several CP to ensure the start of the work during 2021 already.

5.3 Developing tools for beach litter data flow and assessment

Subtask 5.3.1 Developing the required mechanism to ensure reporting of national beach litter monitoring data

Data reporting guidance to HOLAS III data call was prepared and included in the HOLAS III data call, on section 2a for beach litter indicator (monitoring data requested to be reported to EMODNET Chemistry).

Data extraction for 2016-2020 data was requested from EMODnet Chemistry and received during summer 2021.

5.3.2 Tool for developing beach litter assessment

Tool for developing beach litter assessment will be specified in further detail based on experts input, and facilitat working on the data collected and defining required outputs of EMODnet chemistry.

During autumn 2021 experts will investigate suitability of the data output for assessment and the LitterR software (in alignment with OSPAR approach) and to prepare a process for HOLAS III assessment.

Annex 1. Advice request specification to ICES

This task defines advice request for ICES on creating fishing effort and intensity maps. The maps will be built, based on the defined data requirements for the fishing effort data (VMS and logbook data) to make the maps useful for both cumulative impact assessment (HELCOM BSII/BSPI, CumI indicator) and for other purposes (e.g. estimating bycatch).

More specifically, the advice request is the following:

To assess benthic impact, ICES is requested to produce updated spatial data (map) layers on fishing intensity / pressure within the HELCOM maritime area according to the details set out in the sections below. Following on from the format of the previous HELCOM requests, HELCOM requests ICES, to:

- a. *Collect relevant national VMS and logbook data for 2016–2021*
- b. *Prepare spatial layers for the HELCOM maritime area:*
 - a. *all gear types: effort, especially need information on static gears to be included, i.e. FYK, GTR, GNS, LLS, FPO per month or quarter (minimum) of 2016-2021*
 - b. *on the intensity of fishing using mobile bottom contacting gears. ICES is requested to specifically produce fishing intensity / pressure spatial layers containing the following information per c-square and per quarter of year:*
 - i. *Aggregated layers: total, beam trawl, dredge, demersal seine, otter trawl.*
 - ii. *Métier layers: OT_CRU, OT_DMF, OT_MIX, OT_MIX_CRU, OT_MIX_DMF_BEN, OT_MIX_DMF_PEL, OT_MIX_CRU_DMF, OT_SPF, TBB_CRU, TBB_DMF, TBB_MOL, DRB_MOL, SDN_DMF, SSC_DMF.*
 - iii. *Provide the footprint of the grid cells (0.05 x 0.05 c-squares) that contain 90% of the highest fishing intensity of total fishing effort of the region. The resulting area or footprint can be defined as the core fishing grounds (or the smallest area that comprises 90% of the total swept area).*
 - iv. *The areal fraction per grid cell where 100 % of the swept area occurs (alternatively fraction per grid cell without trawling)*

Intensity layers with the following attributes included in each layer: Surface area in Km² (Swept area), Surface area ratio, Subsurface area in Km² (Swept area), Subsurface area ratio, Total Weight, Total value, Kw Fishing Hours, Fishing hours.