



Document title	Condition of benthic habitats
Code	3J-25
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	3J-Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
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Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

The document below provides a template filled by indicator leads to provide an overview of progress to STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021. Key aspects such as methodologies, spatial extent changes, assessment scales and threshold values are presented, identifying ongoing work and other relevant issues towards HOLAS III. This process builds on the prior review of indicator development carried out under STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 (summarised in [document 4J-16 Rev.1](#), and detailed within numerous documents under agenda item 4J). The focus of these development works is the completion of indicator development and adjustment work for HOLAS III by the end of 2021, as previously agreed under HOD 57-2019 ([document 4-20, Outcomes paragraph 4.51](#)).

The aspect of threshold values in particular is a key issue as threshold value approval will be carried out at HOD 61-2021, with these same templates being submitted to HOD at the same stage as submission to State and Conservation 15-2021 (to allow for the longer national processes required that culminate in approval at HOD).

The document below addresses a single indicator and as well as the generic 'action requests' relating to endorsement of the proposed application in HOLAS III (and the threshold values proposals, where relevant), specific additional requests or statements are also indicated within the separate sections of the document to help guide where further input/discussion/guidance may be needed.

This template aims to report the indicator development for HOLAS III, allowing for technical guidance and endorsement by STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 and also simultaneously to facilitate the threshold value approval process by HOD 61-2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- provide further technical guidance to the indicator leads and experts, including specific requests defined within the document;
- consider and endorse the proposed developments of the indicator for use in the HOLAS III assessment.

Condition of benthic habitats

Indicator name
Condition of benthic habitats
Scale of assessment for HOLAS III and rational
The assessment scale will not be established by HOLAS III, though likely to be aligned with other relevant benthic habitat assessments (potentially at scale 2).
Spatial coverage of the indicator for HOLAS III
<p>Towards HOLAS III it is proposed that selected test cases would be carried out, these acting both as proof of concept for the approach recently discussed in EN-BENTHIC (see document 4-2 from EN-BENTHIC 7) and also if functional would allow for localised test cases to be presented as supporting contextual information in HOLAS III.</p> <p>The STATE & CONSERVATION meeting is invited to endorse the proposed approach to adapt the existing methodology of the Condition of benthic habitats indicator to be aligned with a recent proposal under EN BENTHIC and EU TG Seabed with a view to evaluating the approach and developing potential test cases for inclusion in the HOLAS III thematic assessment of biodiversity.</p>
Methodology to be applied for HOLAS III and rational
The methodology in the existing Condition of benthic habitats indicator would be adapted to test the proposed approach set out document 4-2 from EN-BENTHIC 7 . In addition, to evaluate the approach and determine the outcomes of the methodological structure set out in the proposal the methodology will be tested to address an area with high data quality, sequentially removing key data components within the structure to determine the impact on the assessment and the confidence/sufficiency evaluation.
Threshold value setting logic and rational
The threshold value setting approach for this indicator are closely aligned to processes under the MSFD, which is important for harmonisation for those HELOCM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States. The process to develop methodologies and threshold values under this process are still ongoing. No threshold values will be applied within the HOLAS III process. Should closely aligned processes within EU TG Seabed achieve the aim of proposing threshold values prior to HOLAS III for this assessment component then it may also be possible to further develop the test cases to consider these.
Threshold value(s)
No threshold values will be applied within the HOLAS III process. Should closely aligned processes within EU TG Seabed achieve the aim of proposing threshold values prior to HOLAS III for this assessment component then it may also be possible to further develop the test cases to consider these.
Other significant issues that need to be addressed or presented to State and Conservation
No specific issues are currently identified.
Latest indicator report or (for new indicators) initially completed indicator template
As the indicator is still under development, no indicator report is available.