



Document title	The assessment of bycatch for HOLAS III
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Background

The HOLAS III assessment follows a structure which aims to ensure robust results and traceability across the several steps which are integral to a usable holistic approach. Each of the steps of the process represents a progressively more integrated assessment result, eventually culminating in the holistic assessment report State of the Baltic Sea (see Figure 1 for a conceptual overview). This document presents the plan for assessment of bycatch, which builds on the relevant indicator report and other relevant information and in turn constitutes a chapter in the Thematic assessment report on Biodiversity (red highlight in Figure 1 indicates which step in the process is addressed by the content of this document).

Holistic summary report: State of the Baltic Sea

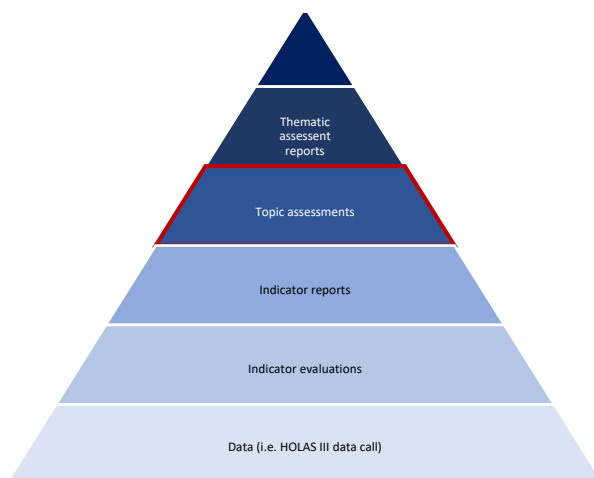


Figure 1. Conceptual overview of the HOLAS III assessment structure and the progressive integration of results.

This document contains a brief overview of ongoing work and progress under the HELCOM BLUES project related to bycatch and provides a brief overview proposal of how bycatch information will be utilised/represented in HOLAS III. Information provided in document 3J-45 and its annex is also relevant.

This document contains an overview of indicator and assessment work related to the bycatch of marine mammals and waterbirds and addresses the utilization of these in HOLAS III. The overview considers how the separate components are compiled and combined and represent bycatch appropriately in HOLAS III, for example how the indicator evaluations form the basis of the indicator reports, which, supported by scientific contextual information assess a topic (Topic Assessment) that is then included in a Thematic assessment (e.g. Biodiversity). The above conceptual overview outlines the general flow of information within this process and the segment identified in red is the focus of this document. With the specific bycatch topic it is important

to note that the 'Topical Assessment' will not be a single topic but will be reflected under the topic assessments of waterbirds and marine mammals.

The document also contains a proposal for the HELCOM BLUES project to convene a regional workshop to showcase developments within the indicator, gain valuable input from across the region, and to agree on the most appropriate way to use risk-based evaluations and threshold value-based evaluations within the indicator and assessment at HOLAS III.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider and endorse the proposed developments towards the assessment of bycatch in HOLAS III;
- support the proposal for the HELCOM BLUES project to hold a workshop and invite experts from the region.

The Assessment of bycatch in HOLAS III

The work under HELCOM BLUES focusses on the further development of the HELCOM indicator ‘Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear’. The work in the project addresses two major issues: 1) the further development and application of threshold value-based indicator evaluations, building on the work carried out in the joint OSPAR-HELCOM Workshop in 2019 ([Incidental bycatch WS 1-2019](#)), and 2) the further development of risk mapping evaluation approaches, building on the work of the HELCOM ACTION project (e.g. [Work package 1 report](#)).

The figure below aims to summarise the approach, though the component parts may also be influenced by decisions made on these individual parts, (as represented in the documents addressing those specific component parts).

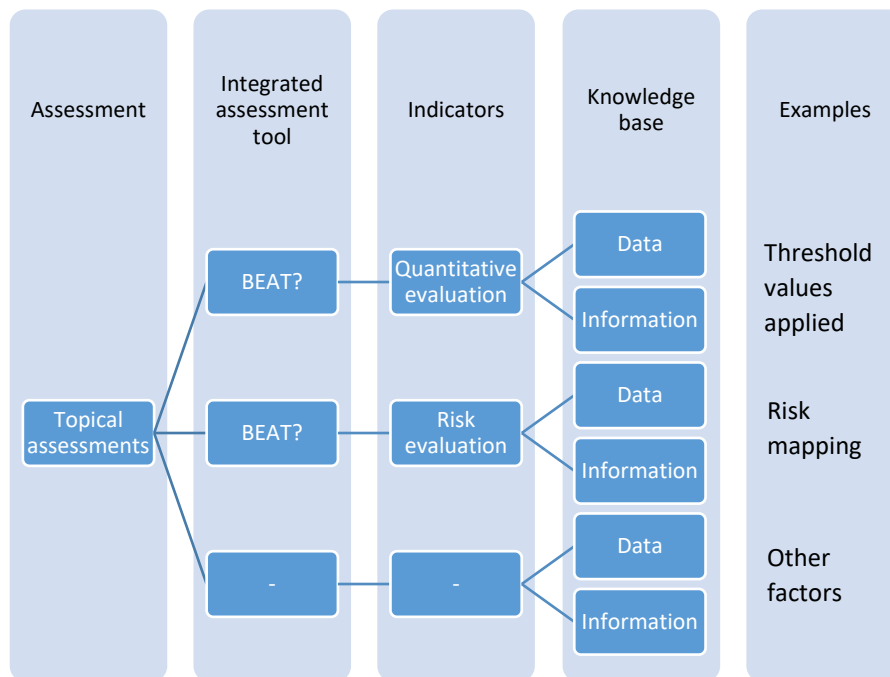


Figure 2. Process and component parts of assembling a topic assessment under HOLAS III

The bycatch topic is relevant for both the topical assessment of waterbirds and marine mammals in HOLAS III. The specific manner in which it should be utilised, e.g. in BEAT, is also addressed in other documents to this meeting.

General application within the indicator and HOLAS III Thematic Assessment of biodiversity

The assessment of bycatch for HOLAS III will in technical terms be applied via the HELCOM indicator ‘Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear’ in that the aim would be to include threshold value-based assessments of bycatch (where there is sufficient data available through the HOLAS III data call) and the expanded risk mapping carried out under HELCOM BLUES within the indicator report. The aim with the expanded risk mapping would be to build on the work carried out under HELCOM ACTION and expand the approaches applied to a broader area, more gear types and also more species where possible. The indicator itself would therefore include both of these further developed approaches.

A more detailed overview of the ongoing work under HELCOM BLUES Activity 2 and the bycatch task are included in [document 4J-65 to State and Conservation 14-2021](#). The detailed developments related to

threshold value proposals for HOLAs III are the subject of another document to this meeting (document 3J-45).

The information collated and evaluations carried out within the indicator would then be used within the HOLAS III Thematic Assessment of biodiversity (mammals and waterbirds sections) to support an understanding of the impacts of bycatch on these key biodiversity components. This indicator information would also be supported by relevant contextual information derived from published literature and reports to provide the clearest information of the topic as possible.

[Application in the BEAT integrated assessment tool](#)

The appropriate application of the further developed indicator in the biodiversity integrated assessment (BEAT) is addressed separately under document 3J-48 to this meeting, where issues relevant to the inclusion of bycatch are identified. The issues related to the inclusion of bycatch within BEAT are applicable for both waterbirds and mammals.

[Proposed workshop under HELCOM BLUES](#)

Under the HELCOM BLUES Activity 2 task related to bycatch where the indicator development is ongoing an online regional workshop is included within the project work plan. The project partners, that include the leads of the bycatch indicator, have proposed that the workshop would focus on two major issues: firstly reviewing the developments undertaken related to testing threshold value approaches and risk assessments, and secondly on how to best integrate/coordinate the two approaches/methodologies within the indicator. Since the bycatch indicator addresses issues relevant to more than one Expert Group this would provide an opportunity to gather vital regional input and guidance from both mammal and waterbird experts. The workshop is proposed to take place in the latter part of 2021, or early 2022.