Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Science Agenda Task Group   Science Agenda TG 5-2020

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Background

This document includes the information on the Science Agenda that has been submitted to HELCOM Working Group meetings in autumn 2020. Note that the draft Science Agenda will be made available to the groups, intersessionally, by 30 October 2020 with the invitation to amend the comprehensive survey (excel-file) in case they find something missing.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Background

HELCOM 40-2019 agreed to develop a HELCOM Science Agenda, concomitantly with the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (Outcome, para 2.29). The agenda is to outline existing and foreseen HELCOM regional knowledge and science needs and will serve the development of activities in HELCOM as well as to inform external funding mechanisms on the research needs of HELCOM.

The HELCOM Science Agenda Task Group was established to prepare the HELCOM Science Agenda report based on the contributions received through a survey among HELCOM subsidiary bodies and the tasks and mandate assigned by HELCOM HOD 56-2019 (document 2-6, HOD 56-2019). The survey results will be made available in full as a comprehensive inventory of HELCOM knowledge and research needs.

HELCOM 41-2020 and HOD 58-2020 have provided guidance to the further development of the Science Agenda based on proposals and draft texts prepared by the Science Agenda Task Group (HELCOM 41-2020 para 4.4, HOD 58-2020 para 4.46-4.52).

This document includes background information to the work done to develop the Science Agenda report. The Science Agenda report will be made available to HELCOM Working groups intersessionally, by 30 October 2020. Working Groups are invited to complement the comprehensive survey of knowledge and science needs if issues of importance to HELCOM are found missing. The HELCOM Science Agenda report will be presented for provisional approval by HOD 59-2020, while being kept open for late inclusion of a few identified key issues, already tentatively identified as expected input from the continued BSAP UP process. The intention is for the Science Agenda to be published together with the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan in autumn 2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- – take note that the Science Agenda report and its associated comprehensive inventory of HELCOM knowledge and research needs will be made available by 30 October 2020.

Working mode for the Science Agenda Task Group

The Science Agenda Task Group has held four meetings (Science Agenda TG 1-2020, TG 2-2020, TG 3-2020, TG 4-2020,) and one intersessional meeting to follow-up on HELCOM 41-2020. The Group currently consists of representatives of eight countries. The Group has agreed jointly on the outline of the Science Agenda report (see next section) and prepared guidance on how the texts should be developed (Annex 1). Lead countries have been assigned to drafting of texts for specific topics. The drafting is carried out by representatives of the Task Group or by national expertise involved in HELCOM work.

The list of priority topics has been revised based on the advice given by HELCOM 41-2020. Comments from HOD 58-2020 on the first consolidated draft of the report have been addressed by the Group (see Notes from Science Agenda TG 4-2020).

Use of HELCOM survey on knowledge and research needs

As outlined in the guidance for the drafting of texts (see below) the highlighted science needs that have been formulated for each priority topic primarily draws from the survey of HELCOM knowledge and science needs that was conducted among HELCOM expert networks and Working Groups in 2019 and as addressed at previous Working Group meetings (STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019 doc 9J-1 and STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 doc 8J-6). This survey will be made available in full as a comprehensive inventory of HELCOM knowledge needs.

As agreed the Science Agenda report aims at having a relatively long shelf-life (10 years). This means that the highlighted science needs in the Science Agenda report have been formulated relatively broadly while the comprehensive inventory provides more specific examples. The Task Group has also complemented the survey results as seen necessary, in accordance with the mandate of the Group (document 2-6, HOD 56-2019).

Demarcations

The Science Agenda report focused on knowledge and research needs to support the implementation of HELCOM agreements. It should thus focus on applied knowledge and research needs with a clear link to HELCOM work.

Identified needs for additional monitoring, mapping or assessments are as such not addressed in the Science Agenda.

The Science Agenda and updated BSAP should not have identical science needs/actions although topically they are expected to overlap to ensure that the implementation of the updated BSAP is supported by relevant knowledge enhancing projects.

Outline of the HELCOM Science Agenda

Outline:

0.	Introduction

Why a HELCOM science agenda (what is the purpose of the HELCOM science agenda, who is the target audience)

How the Science Agenda was developed (who participated, how were the priority areas identified)

How to read the Science Agenda (reading instructions, including highlighting cross-cutting issues)

1.	BIODIVERSITY

1.1	Species

1.2	Habitats

1.3	Food webs

1.4	Marine Protected Areas

2.	HUMAN DIMENSION

2.1	Climate change

2.2	Eutrophication

2.3	Hazardous Substances

2.4	Marine litter

2.5	Underwater noise

2.6	Non-indigenous species

2.7	Shipping

2.8	Fisheries

3.	HOLISTIC APPROACHES

3.1	Ecosystem approach

3.2	Maritime Spatial Planning

3.3	Cumulative impacts

3.4	Economic and social analyses

4	How the HELCOM Science Agenda can be implemented

Direct involvement of HELCOM (potential for HELCOM to initiate knowledge related projects)

External initiatives (a reflection on external processes that could support the implementation of the science agenda)

Annex 1: Countries and HELCOM subsidiary bodies that have contributed

Annex 2: Links to HELCOM agreements and UN commitments

Supplementary material: Comprehensive inventory of HELCOM knowledge and research needs (excel-file)

Annex 1. Guidance for prepared draft text for topics

as of Science Agenda TG 3-2020, 30 April 2020 and presend to HOD 58-2020.

What to include under a topic:

- each priority topic is briefly described in terms of why it is a priority topic as well as to mention science needs in broader terms. Links to key HELCOM strategies on the topic could be mentioned.
- the general text is followed by more specific 'highlights', drawing from the survey of knowledge and science needs but summarizing and merging proposals from the contributions as suitable. The Science Agenda TG can also complement the survey but additions should be discussed jointly by the Group.
    - o 3-8 highlights could be identified for each priority topic.
    - o formulate highlighted science needs as stated science needs
    - o as needed, clarify the identified knowledge needs and how it will be used (better to use a few extra words than for the reader not to understand the required knowledge or purpose)
    - o sub-titles to the highlights can be used to structure different type of knowledge and science needs; to be agreed on a case by case basis
    - o recall that texts in the main part of the science agenda should have a relatively long shelf-life (10 years) while specific examples can be given in the annexes [and supplementary material] which are planned to be updated more frequently.
    - o highlights should be formulated as knowledge/research needs (i.e. not as actions e.g. "assess", "monitor").
- maximum space for a priority topic is 1 page, in layout format for printing. Number of words for introductory text to the topic should be kept between 175-225 words.

How to select highlights:

- Focus on identified applied knowledge needs for management of the marine environment
- Focus on proposals with a clear link to the implementation of HELCOM agreement and strategies
- Focus on knowledge needs from a regional perspective