



## Notes from HELCOM Science Agenda Task Group 6-2020

The 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HELCOM Science Agenda Task Group was held 14 December 2020 as an online meeting.

The Meeting was attended by representatives from Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Sweden. Ulla Li Zweifel and Jannica Haldin participated from the HELCOM Secretariat.

The aim of the Meeting was to follow-up on comments from HELCOM Working Groups and HOD 59-2020 and to finalize the Science Agenda report with regard to the assignments of the Science Agenda Task Group.

### Agenda item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting adopted the agenda of the provisional annotated agenda (document 1-1).

### Agenda item 2 Outcome of HOD 59-2020

The Meeting noted that HOD 59-2020 provisionally adopted the Science Agenda report.

### Agenda item 3 Comments from Working Groups and BSAP update process

The Meeting discussed the comments received through BSAP update process and from the intersessional circulation of the Science Agenda report to HELCOM Working Groups (document 3-1).

The Meeting noted that some actions that were originally proposed to be included in the updated BSAP have instead been proposed to be addressed in the Science Agenda since HELCOM BSAP workshops and Working Groups have considered that current knowledge is not sufficient to agree on or implement them as actions.

The Meeting was of the view that several of these proposals are too specific to be included in the main Science Agenda report and agreed that they should be included in the comprehensive HELCOM inventory of knowledge and science needed (Annex 1). This will require some rephrasing of the proposals which will be carried out by the Secretariat. Supporting information will be retrieved from the synopses that have been developed for the proposed BSAP actions or by direct communication with countries or experts that originally formulated the proposals.

The Meeting agreed to consult with the Fish Group on three proposals that have been proposed to be included in the Science Agenda.

- 1) "Analysis of pressures affecting fish stocks in order to identify complementary measures". The substance and purpose of this proposal was not found clear and the Fish Group will be asked to clarify the proposal.
- 2) To include in the Science Agenda the need for development of criteria to assess size and age distribution of fish stocks. The Meeting recalled that the Science Agenda already includes a similar highlight, although focused on coastal fish, and proposed to amend the existing highlight so that it reads: "Development and optimization of methodology for the assessment of age and size distribution of Baltic Sea fish populations".
- 3) To include in the Science agenda collection of data on by-catch. The Meeting reiterated that to highlight monitoring and collection of data as such will not be part of the Science Agenda but are

rather actions to be included in the BSAP. It was also noted that similar agreements for data collection are included in the HELCOM roadmap on fisheries data. The Fish Group will be informed that the following highlight is included in the Science Agenda: “Intensified research on bycaught species of all métiers to assess bycatch rates of seabirds, marine mammals and protected fish species”.

The Meeting considered the comment from Denmark on the Eutrophication section that it could exclude topics of interest such as such as research on measures that target safe removal of internal nutrient loads. The Meeting agreed to supplement one of the existing highlights (addition underlined): “Investigating the obstacles preventing the decrease of nutrient concentrations and contraction of hypoxic/anoxic areas in the sea. This encompasses improving the understanding of how the complex nutrient dynamics, including feedbacks with oxygen conditions, control the legacy of nutrients and whether there is potential in sea-based measures to accelerate recovery”.

The Meeting discussed latest proposals and changes to the Science Agenda report from the Task Group. The Meeting agreed to remove the existing highlight on “High resolution data on shipping activities for cumulative impact assessment” since it focuses on data collection. The proposal will be kept in the comprehensive HELCOM inventory of knowledge and science needs.

The Meeting took note of and agreed to the proposed amendment by Sweden at HOD 59-2020 (addition underlined): “Improved knowledge on submerged munition and historically dumped waste and its integrity (e.g. status of corrosion, leakage of the hazardous substances) per location including development of a risk assessment approach for marine environment (e.g. in biota, if applicable in sediment and water)”.

The Meeting agreed to include a list of contributors to the Science Agenda report consisting of the SA Task Group representatives, involved representatives from the Secretariat, and the national experts that have contributed to the writing of the report. The SA Task Group are invited to clarify the list of national experts to be included as contributors and inform [jannica.haldin@helcom.fi](mailto:jannica.haldin@helcom.fi).

#### Agenda item 4 Next steps

The Meeting noted that the assignments for the SA Task Group end by end of 2020 and that there are no plans for additional meetings. The Task Group will however be informed on amendments made in spring 2021 and will have the opportunity to provide comments.

The Meeting took note that the following steps remain and will be arranged for by the Secretariat:

- Final edits and harmonization of texts
- A figure that describe how the sections are linked
- Addition on relevant HELCOM agreements to the topic sections
- Possible revision of e.g. MSP section pending finalization of the roadmap on MSP in spring 2021
- Annexes: to provide a link between the highlights and the BSAP
- Comprehensive inventory (excel-file): indicate topics that would be needed by 2025 to support planned HELCOM processes

#### Agenda item 5 Notes from the meeting

The Notes from the meeting were approved through written procedure.

## Annex 1. Proposals from BSAP update process for inclusion in the comprehensive HELCOM inventory of knowledge and science needs

- 1) Elimination of invasive plant Elodea
- 2) Harvesting of reed and excessive vegetation
- 3) Rehabilitation of hypoxic areas by oxygen pumping
- 4) Reducing internal phosphorus loads by metal bounding
- 5) Biomanipulation to remove cyprinds and sticklebacks and rehabilitate coastal ecosystem function
- 6) Rehabilitation of anoxic, nutrient rich or polluted sediments by removal or coverage
- 7) Restocking of marine areas with fry of European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)
- 8) No further expansion of fishing effort to areas not already impacted by existing fishing activities
- 9) Reporting estimates on the effects of agri-environmental measures on the main phosphorus (P) fractions
- 10) Establishing a harmonized eDNA methodology and start a baseline monitoring system throughout the Baltic Sea