OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, and

Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area

Meeting of the Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling (TG BALLAST 11-2020)

Online: 26-27 November 2020

Amendment to the Joint Harmonised Procedure in order to include nekton in the port survey protocol

Presented by Poland

Issue: This document sets out the proposal to include nekton in the Port Survey Protocol

Action requested

1. JTG-Ballast is invited to:

    a. consider the proposed amendments to the Port Survey Protocol and discuss other issues related to sampling of nektonic organisms,
    b. discuss the final draft and consider further steps connected to its approval.

Background

2. Page 12 of the Joint Harmonised Procedure as approved by the 20th Meeting Of The Maritime Working Group ("**JHP**"): "2.3 Port surveys for detecting NIS require sampling of several different habitats, their respective groups of organisms and life stages […]".

    Page 31 of the JHP [Annex 6]: "Surveys of biota include sampling of different groups of organisms: hard substrate organisms, soft bottom benthos, plankton and mobile epifauna, and fish.".

    Page 34 of the JHP [section: Mobile epifauna and fish]: "Traps are selective in nature and therefore provide only relative measures of species abundances. However, the range of methods that can be used to sample epifauna in the port area is very limited and for example it is in most cases not possible to use trawls and gillnets.".

    Hence, sampling of typically nektonic organisms, including fish, is not sufficiently reflected in the present Port Survey Protocol.

Proposal for amendments:

i. Page 34 JHP [section: Mobile epifauna and fish]: "[…] However, the range of methods that can be used to sample epifauna in the port area is very limited and **in some places** ~~for example it is in most cases~~ **it is** not possible to use trawls and gillnets. **Standard multi-mesh gillnets used in monitoring of fish fauna should be used in the harbour areas where this does not interfere with shipping traffic (e.g. abandoned basins with quays not in use, other peripheral harbour areas) or outside harbours as close as possible to their entrances.**".

ii. Page 50 JHP [Sample data sheet (Field data sheet 3)]: add column "Nekton" in the table.

iii. Other relevant fragments of JHP to be amended accordingly.

Justification

Larger pelagic fish cannot be effectively sampled with small traps designed to catch mobile benthic invertebrates and smaller fish, including fry, living on or close to the seabed.

While there are only two alien fish species found in the HELCOM area, whose introduction has been assigned to ballast water (including invasive *Neogobius melanostomus*, commonly regarded as "ballast water" species), there are at least 10 such instances indicated in the OSPAR area.

A number of studies of ships substantiate possible relevance of spread of fish with ballast water, and typically pelagic species are also on the list.

Examples from several port surveys in the world demonstrate, that the application of fishing gear is a possible and effective way of sampling of ichthyofauna in port areas. Polish experience, e.g. in the harbour area of Swinoujscie, supports that view.

Moreover, regular fisheries activities (with the use of set gillnets) often take place close to the entrances to harbours.