

Work Plan for HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State and Conservation) 2017-2018

No.	ACTION	LEAD/ RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS and INTERLINKED ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME
Task 1: Implementation of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy , including development of necessary manuals and guidelines i.a. related to quality assurance, taking into account the existing international guidance documents				
1.1	Review existing HELCOM monitoring guidelines and develop new guidelines for new monitoring sub-programmes included in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual. The review and development should include QA/QC guidelines.	State and Conservation, Seal EG, ZEN-QAI, PEG, FISH-PRO II, MORS	Development of core indicators	Ongoing- mid-2017
1.2	Review and revision of HELCOM Recommendation 19/3 on monitoring	State and Conservation		To start when guidelines (task 1.1) have been revised. Aim for adoption of revised Recommendation by HELCOM 39 (2018).
Task 2: Functioning of the HELCOM Joint Coordinated Monitoring system covering all aspects from flora and fauna of the Baltic Sea to water quality and human pressures				
2.1a)	Development of a coordinated monitoring programme. When indicators have been further developed and revised national monitoring programmes have been implemented, an analysis of the coherence and adequacy of the HELCOM Monitoring programmes should be considered.	State and Conservation	HOLAS II project Base the analysis on information of national monitoring programmes and requirements for core indicators. Initiate in 2018. Overall low priority.	2018
2.1b)	Development of a coordinated monitoring programme. Review data arrangements for existing components of HELCOM monitoring and develop data arrangements for those components without existing reporting structure e.g. for birds, coastal fish, seals, benthic habitat monitoring, marine litter, underwater noise, hydrography	State and Conservation Seal EG, ZEN-QAI, PEG, FISH-PRO II Secretariat [possibly supported by project]	Data needs for HOLAS II project BalticBOOST project, TAPAS Project	Ongoing - mid-2017

2.2	Develop a reporting system on prioritized human activities and pressures, building on the existing HELCOM reporting, to regularly collect harmonized data for HELCOM assessments	State and Conservation Other WGs Secretariat	Data needs for HOLAS II project. Link to MSP needs.	Ad hoc activities ongoing. Identification of priorities for regular reporting in autumn 2017 utilizing HOLAS II experience.
2.3	Establish a set technical standards which may be used for monitoring ambient underwater noise in the Baltic Sea	State and Conservation	Technical standards proposed by the Life+BIAS project was presented to State and Conservation 3-2015 but was not agreed. A proposal from the BIAS project for a coordinated monitoring programme of underwater presented at State and Conservation 4-2016.	2017-2018
Task 3: Development of operational HELCOM core indicators , with associated targets to serve e.g. holistic assessments according to the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Ministerial Declarations, and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive for those Contracting Parties also being EU Member States				
3.1	Development of HELCOM core, pre-core and candidate indicators, including for biodiversity, hazardous substance, marine litter, underwater noise, input of nutrients	State and Conservation Pressure	Indicators to be used in HOLAS II, relevant for MSP	Ongoing. Core indicators to be used for HOLAS II operational by March 2017.
3.2	Further development of eutrophication core indicators Operationalization of eutrophication assessment system	State and Conservation EN-Eutrophication supported by EUTRO-OPER EXTENDED	Indicators to be used in HOLAS II	Ongoing activity under EN-Eutrophication supported by project EUTRO-OPER EXTENDED until end of 2016.
Task 4 Periodic assessments of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - biodiversity, eutrophication, hazardous substances, marine litter and underwater noise, thereby providing building blocks for HELCOM Holistic assessments; - threat status of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes; - the status and progress towards an ecologically coherent and effectively managed network of HELCOM coastal and marine Protected Areas (MPAs¹), and strive for harmonized approach in reporting, including its timing taking into account the work on global and European level; - regional climate change and its implications on the Baltic Sea ecosystem in cooperation with Baltic Earth (BALTEX), and recommend actions as appropriate 				

4.1	Carry out thematic assessments of hazardous substances, biodiversity, eutrophication and a holistic assessment of the Ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea as part of the HOLAS II project	State and Conservation HOLAS II		Carried out by April 2017 and by April 2018 as part of HOLAS II.
4.2	Thematic assessment on radioactivity for the period 2011-2015	State and Conservation MORS EG	Should feed into HOLAS II	Ongoing – to be presented to State and Conservation in spring 2017.
4.3	Thematic assessment on coastal fish for the period 2008-2015	State and Conservation FISH-PRO II	Should feed into HOLAS II	Ongoing - early 2017
4.4	Assessment of the risk of extinction of species and biotopes (HELCOM Red List)	State and Conservation [Project needs to be establish]	How to use existing HELCOM Red List in HOLAS II?	Open. [STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 to discuss timing of next Red List assessment]
4.5	Micropollutants in effluents from wastewater treatment plants	State and Conservation Pressure	Pressure WG is lead on the action	2017
4.6	Thematic assessment on climate change	State and Conservation Cooperation with BalticEarth anticipated		2018-
Task 5: Assess human pressures and impacts as part of the Holistic assessments, e.g. utilizing inputs from other HELCOM subsidiary bodies on e.g. waterborne and airborne inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances, oils spills, etc.				
5.1	Carry out an assessment of human pressures on the Baltic Sea	State and Conservation HOLAS II Pressure	Pressure WG to feed in data and support retrieval of data	Carried out by April 2017 and April 2018 as part of HOLAS II.

Task 6: Prepare proposals for measures for the conservation and protection of species and coastal and marine habitats and biotopes and follow up on implementation of measures, e.g. in order to initiate protection of highly endangered species and threatened habitats and biotopes

6.1	New HELCOM Recommendation on conservation plans for habitats and biotopes at risk of extinction	State and Conservation Lead country Germany		Ongoing. Aim for adoption at HELCOM 38 (2017).
6.2	Identify regional priorities for ecosystem restoration in the Baltic Sea	State and Conservation	Related to Aichi target. Look into strengthening biotope related work after HOLAS II in 2018	2018
6.3	Follow-up HELCOM Recommendation 34E/1 on safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea).	State and Conservation Contracting Parties	Focus in a first step (2017) on the development of maps of migration routes. Initiate a follow-up the Recommendation as as whole in 2018. Linked to the protection of seabirds in the Baltic sea, taking into consideration migratory species and need for co-operation with other regions through conventions and institutions such as the agreement on conservation of African Eurasian migratory waterbirds (AEWA) under the convention on migratory species (CMS), and particularly in the North sea (OSPAR) and Arctic (Arctic council), and the Birds Directive. Linked to 6.2, link to MSP	2017-2018
6.4	Increase positive incentives to enhance reduction of pressures on biodiversity and “elimination by 2020 of incentives and subsidies which could be harmful to biodiversity”	State and Conservation	Proposed to be reflected in the section measures in HOLAS II.	2017-2018
6.5	Activities to support conservation of Baltic Sea species and biotopes/habitats categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List.	State and Conservation	First step of the action has been carried out to make an inventory of existing measures that will contribute to the improved status of threatened species and biotopes/habitats	2017-2018

			and analyze if they are sufficient to improve the state of those species	
Task 7: Further develop the system of coastal and marine protected areas and promote monitoring and research in these areas				
7.1	Coordination of management measures of pressures and impacts on MPAs, in particular for adjacent transnational MPAs	State and Conservation [tentatively through project]	First step of the action has been carried out: identify adjacent transnational MPAs using HELCOM MPA database and invite Contracting Parties to inform on any contacts between MPA managers	2017-2018
7.2	How to consider MPAs in Maritime Spatial Planning and vice versa?	State and Conservation HELCOM-VASAB MSP [tentatively through project]		2017-2018
7.3	Develop joint tools/approach for assessing effectiveness of spatial protection measures for individual sites as well as network level.	State and Conservation		2017-2018
Task 8: Cooperate with, and seek synergies with relevant work carried out in other international organizations and institutions and processes relevant for the group such as ICES, EEA, JRC, OSPAR, Convention on Biological Diversity, MSFD Common Implementation Strategy, etc.				
8.1	Continued co-operation with ASCOBANS and updating of the coordinated reporting system and database on Baltic harbour porpoise sightings, by-catches, strandings and acoustic observations	State and Conservation SEAL EG		Reporting of harbour porpoise observations annually at the Seal EG meeting
Task 9: Develop and maintain the regional data and information systems needed to carry out its tasks				
9.1	Develop detailed landscape and biotope maps	State and Conservation	Draft maps on key habitat forming species available through HOLAS II. Aim to base mapping on HUB through initiatives by Contracting Parties.	2018 - make an updated inventory of national mapping
9.2	Modernization of HELCOM data management and systems, including expansion of the HELCOM Geographic Information System (GIS) system to show the progress towards a healthy Baltic Sea	Secretariat	link to MSP, cooperation with OSPAR, EEA, ICES TAPAS project	HELCOM Data and Map service will be updated in 2017.

Continuous or annual activities under the State and Conservation Working Group

ACTIVITY	LEAD/ RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS and INTERLINKED ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME
Implementation of Recommendation 26/3 Monitoring of radioactive substances	State and Conservation MORS		Annually
Reporting on HELCOM Recommendations under State and Conservation	State and Conservation		Annually
Update Baltic Sea Environmental Fact Sheets (BSEFS)	State and Conservation BSEFS authors (e.g. Seal EG, PEG, FISH-PRO II, MORS, Response, HELCOM data consultants and responsible national institutes etc.)	Supporting information to be used in HOLAS II	Annually or when new data is available
Update of national information in the modernized MPA database	Contracting Parties		Annually
Seek opportunities to collaborate with OSPAR in the development of indicators, the development of monitoring guidelines, and as otherwise appropriate	State and Conservation		Continuous
Keep up to date a list of non-indigenous and cryptogenic species for the Baltic Sea	State and Conservation	Feed into the HELCOM Maritime work on updating the list of HELCOM Target Species for ballast water management	Continuous
Communicate to relevant authorities and institutions the needs for adequate knowledge on by-caught birds, mammals and threatened fish species, in particular sturgeon, including monitoring and reporting systems	State and Conservation Seal EG	Activities under Fish Group ICES and ASCOBANS by-catch groups	Continuous