



DRAFT HELCOM Network for Marine Protected Area Management
(EN MPA MANET)
Terms of Reference (ToR)

Adopted by Heads of Delegation 56-2019

Background:

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2010:

WE AGREE to develop and apply by 2015, management plans and/or measures for already existing BSPAs; and that every new BSPA designation should within five years be followed by the establishment of a management plan and/or measures;

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2013 stated:

WE DECIDE to re-enforce action to achieve by 2020 an ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas for the Baltic Sea as decided in the BSAP and the Moscow Ministerial Declaration.

WE AGREE to strengthen the efforts to implement the decision made at the HELCOM 2010 Moscow Ministerial Meeting to develop and apply by 2015, management plans and/or measures for already existing Baltic Sea Protected Areas; and to follow every new BSPA designation by the establishment of a management plan and/or measures within five years;

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 concluded the following:

WE WELCOME the significant progress made towards increasing the geographical coverage of the HELCOM marine protected areas (HELCOM MPAs) network. **WE RECALL** the HELCOM commitment to step up efforts to establish an ecologically coherent and effectively managed network of HELCOM MPAs in accordance with HELCOM Recommendation 35/1. **WE ALSO COMMIT** to improving the understanding of the role of MPAs for ecosystem services, in order to enhance cost-effectiveness of MPAs management and yield the greatest environmental benefits. **WE ALSO AGREE** to strive for full achievement of Aichi Target 11 regarding the management, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the HELCOM MPAs network;

The focus of the group is mainly HELCOM Recommendations **35/1: System of coastal and marine Baltic Sea protected areas (HELCOM MPAs)** directly deals with management of MPAs. Further recommendations are relevant to the work of the network (see Annex 1).

Implementation of commitments and initiatives with regards to marine conservation are still in progress in the region. Although the HELCOM region is a global leader when it comes to MPA coverage, MPA management and management effectiveness has been identified as an area where significant progress is still needed.

To this end the first HELCOM MPA management workshop was held in September 2018. The workshop sparked closer cooperation between managers in the HELCOM region, and provided them with a platform to discuss experiences, exchange best practices and identify gaps and challenges related to marine protected areas management. A recommendation for a permanent MPA management network to be established under the auspice of HELCOM arose from the workshop. State and Conservation 9-2018 in turn endorsed the

establishment of a regional MPA management network and requested the Secretariat to present the proposal to HOD 55-2018 for consideration. HOD 55-2018 in principle supported the proposal.

Identified challenges

The Baltic Sea marine protected areas (MPA) network consist of areas protected purely under national legislation, Natura 2000 areas with a marine component and HELCOM MPAs. The two latter overlap to a significant degree. Although the Baltic Sea region has an extensive network and coverage of MPAs, MPA management and management effectiveness has been identified as an area where significant progress is needed. MPA managers often face similar challenges across the region, and management efforts in one protected area can directly affect the effectiveness of another, yet there currently exists little transboundary infrastructure or regional level capacity building to address this. MPA managers have expressed that there is a general lack of overview on methods, best practices and guidelines best suited for the region.

MPA management has to take into account a several commitments as well as possible overlapping legislation which needs to be fulfilled in any given Baltic Sea MPA. Ensuring that these commitments are all accounted for has been identified as one of the main impediments in the work of MPA managers in the Baltic Sea region.

These challenges all indicate that there is a need for a more unified regional approach to MPA management, from communication and sharing practical experiences to use of vocabulary, setting of target and objectives to monitoring, and cross border management.

Purpose of the Network

At the regional level the MPA management network supports the implementation of international agreements and marine policies, fostering partnerships with relevant marine conservation actors and key regional or international organizations and initiatives (e.g. ASCOBANS, EU Biogeographical process etc.).

The network will provide expert input to HELCOM work related to MPA management, as well as conservation of habitats, biotopes and species in general, the relevant Ecological Objectives in the Baltic Sea Action Plan and specifically on the activities identified in these ToR's.

The principal benefits of EN MPA MANET are to have the opportunity for:

- a) stronger links between managers working with MPAs in the region,
- b) improved transfer of valuable information, best practices and experiences
- c) an improved transfer of research results and products between partners and to the policy level.
- d) improved advice and information on necessary actions and measures and on how HELCOM's policies could be adapted in order to support MPA management.
- e) a clear mechanism for demonstrating organizational commitment to addressing MPA management related challenges.
- f) stronger MPA knowledge, capacities and awareness of decision-makers, relevant economic sectors stakeholders and the general public to ensure better policy implementation at national regional and international levels.

Scope:

The overall scope of the group is to enhance the management of Baltic Sea MPAs, on an individual, national and regional level, accounting for both management of individual areas and the network.

The work supports the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), relevant HELCOM Recommendations and subsequent commitments.

Objectives:

The network will work to facilitate regional cooperation and exchange of experiences, facilitate mutual understanding and foster the development of, and actively contribute to achieve, an efficient, representative, connected, integrated and effectively managed network of Baltic Sea MPAs.

This will include strong and active networking of MPA managers and other actors, knowledge and capacity building, and to strengthen MPA policy implementation. This work includes, but is not limited, the needs of the BSAP and subsequent commitments.

Towards this end the objectives of the Network are:

1. to foster exchange of information, experiences and expertise in order to enhance MPA- and MPA management effectiveness, facilitate the work of MPA managers and support transboundary management efforts;
2. to identify and help fill gaps in terms of knowledge, capacity building, or communications and to support development of regional understanding and harmonization of methods and processes;
3. to identify and link national work with HELCOM work;
4. to support managers in their need to adapt to changing contexts by being adaptive and focus on a bottom-up approach;
5. to reinforce the link between local experience and decision-making processes in order to shorten the distance between MPA managers and policies;
6. to engage with other key stakeholders in order to improve effectiveness of MPAs and their management;
7. to support regional assessments of MPA management and link to relevant European Union directives, especially the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Habitats and Birds directive;
8. to provide a platform for applying for financial support for MPA management related work,

Activities and Tasks:

The activities of the group cover a wide range of aspects related to work with MPAs. Sub groups might be defined in order to work more thematically under the umbrella of the network, in order to facilitate intersessional work. The group's activities and tasks link to the following priority MPA-related topics:

- **Collaboration platform:** establishing and supporting collaboration platforms to facilitate dialogue and networking between managers, experts, stakeholders and scientists. This will allow better integration of the existing scientific and practical knowledge about key MPA issues
- **Capacity building:** incrementally developing and implementing a regionally coordinated capacity-building programme, together with possible partners, by integrating the different capacity-building activities formats (regional workshops, trainings, small exchange visits, etc.),
- **Improving awareness:** developing a “bottom-up” approach through ad hoc external communication to improve awareness, inform authorities, decision-makers, the general public, the key economic sectors about, but not limited to:
 - The value of MPAs (ecological and socio-economic),
 - The challenges, added value and success stories of MPA effective management
 - The benefits of strongly protected areas,

- The value of a human network of MPA managers and actors.

- **Information sharing:** making available up-to-date the knowledge to MPA managers, informing them about developments in the fields of MPA management, policy and decision-making, funding opportunities especially at regional, European, and international levels, as well as about technical and strategic activities of the network, and facilitate communication and direct support between members and possible partners.
- **Online platform:** maintaining a dedicated online platform for collaboration and distribution of documentary resources on MPAs.
- **MPA database:** continue to update the HELCOM MPA database with relevant information on the regions MPAs.
- **Monitoring:** supporting harmonized management and monitoring in MPAs across the region and the development and use of management guidelines and simple monitoring protocols that can be easily implemented by MPA managers in different parts of the region.
- **Identifying and filling gaps:** identifying and specifying data and knowledge needs. Wherever possible the network can address these needs through projects developed with national funding or joint research applications'

These overall tasks provide the framework to guide the work of the network, the implementation of which depends on the availability of resources. If possible the network might be a platform to develop and apply for external funded projects in order to accomplish the listed tasks and objectives

Reporting

The Chairs(s) will report on the group's activities to the State and Conservation WG as required. A template for the reporting will be provided by the Secretariat.

Work plan

The Network will, as part of their work, identify topics and challenges which would benefit from regional cooperation or a regional approach and these will form the core of the networks work. As such the network will not prepare a set workplan.

Validity of ToR's

The work of the network is open ended. These ToRs should be subjected to review and revision as needed and are to be presented for endorsement at the working group level and approval by Heads of Delegation.

Organisation of work

The network will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures, including to any person with a contractual relationship with any MPA. The network will report to and receive guidance from the State and Conservation Working Group.

Some activities could be directly implemented by HELCOM and/or the network, or led by HELCOM Contracting Parties, with the support from the HELCOM Secretariat as facilitator/coordinator.

The mode of work for the expert network will be facilitated by the Secretariat, with a physical meetings or workshops taking place as needed. Sub groups might be defined in order to work more thematically. A Chair

will be elected by the network. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated for the aim. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the network

Annex 1 HELCOM Recommendations relevant for the work of the Network

40/1 Conservation and protection of marine and coastal biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red Lists

37/2 Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM red list

27/28-2 Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area,

34E/1 Safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea

17/2 Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area

15/1R Protection of the coastal strip