

Workplan of HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Protected Areas (EG MPA), 2023-2024

No	Task	Lead, responsible bodies, and interlinked activities	Next steps and comments	Output
Spatial protection measures				
1	<p>BSAP B1: By 2030 at the latest, establish a resilient, regionally coherent, effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected system of HELCOM marine protected areas (MPAs), supported by those other spatial conservation measures, under alternative regimes for marine protection, which can contribute to the coherence of the network. Where scientifically justified, special attention should be given to offshore areas beyond territorial waters. The network of marine protected areas will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cover at least 30% of the marine area of the Baltic Sea, of which at least 1/3 will be strictly protected. Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) could be counted towards the 30% targets only if they, as a minimum, comply with the OECM criteria agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). - where scientifically justified, consider including no-use zones within marine protected areas, which can also serve as scientific reference areas. - expand conservation efforts to actively include areas of particular importance for 	<p>Lead: Finland/PROTECT BALTIC</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Interlinked activities: HT13 (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG), HT14 (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG), CBD targets, EU Biodiversity Strategy, upcoming Nature Restoration Law. Also see Task 7.</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will progress the task using the project as a platform, but in close cooperation with WG BioDiv.</p> <p>2023: start work on establishing a regional MPA framework by establishing an agreed process, followed by scoping goals including how to include climate change in spatial protection planning to ensure the effectiveness of protection also in the long term.</p> <p>2024: Negotiate and establish regional conservation objectives and targets.</p>	<p>By the end of 2030 the HELCOM MPA network is resilient.</p> <p>By the end of 2030 the HELCOM MPA network is regionally coherent.</p> <p>By end of 2030 the HELCOM MPA network is effectively and equitably managed.</p> <p>By end of 2030 the HELCOM MPA network, together with OECMs complying with the CBD criteria, covers at least 30% of the marine area of the Baltic Sea.</p> <p>At least 1/3 of the area covered by the HELCOM MPA network is strictly protected. (Joint measure) (2030)</p> <p>Conservation efforts target and include areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, irrespective of threat status, as outlined in the action. (National measure) (2030)</p>

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	<p>biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, including important ecosystem elements such as species or areas recognized to be ecologically significant based on function for the ecosystem/provisioning of ecosystem services and broad habitat types, but which may not necessarily be rare or threatened.</p> <p>National/Joint</p>			
2	<p>Review, and possibly revise, the HELCOM Recommendation 35/1</p>	<p>Lead: Finland, supported by Sweden</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Interlinked activities: PROTECT BALTIC</p>	<p>2023: submit the proposal to open the Recommendation for approval to HoDs.</p> <p>2024/2027: in close cooperation with PROTECT BALTIC elaborate the needed revisions, reporting requirements, structures intervals etc.</p> <p>2027 at the latest: Submit the updated Recommendation to HOD for approval.</p> <p>2028 at the latest: Adoption of new Recommendation at HELCOM</p>	<p>By 2028 at the latest reviewed and possibly updated Recommendation adopted</p>
3	<p>BSAP B2: By 2022 come to a common understanding of the Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) criteria and their use in HELCOM, based on definitions agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EU, and define how OECMs can support the coherence of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network.</p> <p>By 2025 identification of OECMs in the Baltic Sea region.</p>	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC for how OECMs can support the MPA network</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Interlinked activities: HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will progress work on the second half of the action (defining how OECMs can support the coherence of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network)</p> <p>2023-2025: EG MPA to support the identification process through e.g. the sharing of information on progress and approaches.</p>	<p>Common understanding to be approved by IC HOD 2-2022 and adopted by HELCOM in 2023. (Joint) (Implemented)</p> <p>By 2025 OECMs have been identified for the Baltic Sea region. (National)</p>

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	National/Joint		<p>Autumn 2024: arrange a knowledge sharing session on progress and barriers in identifying OECMs.</p> <p>Autumn 2025: arrange a preparatory session on identified OECMs and the process to officially recognize the areas as OECMs prior to WG BioDiv.</p>	
4	Update the national information in the MPA database.	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC/CPs</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will improve database functionality and reporting, preparing reporting manuals, collating MPA specific information, translating it and populating the database.</p> <p>2024/2025: CPs to review and update national information in the MPA database.</p>	<p>By 2024 updated national information on MPAs included in the database and available for use.</p> <p>By 2028 new MPA database with improved functionality ready and publicly available</p>
5	Update and expand the MPA database. Produce guidance for using and updating the MPA Database.	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will update the database platform and the functionality of the database, draft a manual for its use and collate and populate the database with updated MPA information.</p> <p>2023-2028: EG MPA to support the development of the functionality of the MPA Portal.</p>	<p>By 2028 improved functionality and accessibility of MPA information for the region.</p> <p>By 2028 facilitate reporting to the database.</p>
6	BSAP B6: The coherence of the marine protected area (MPA) network will be periodically assessed at least every ten years, with the next such assessment to be carried out by 2025.	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC/Sweden</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will be improving and implementing the assessment of MPA coherence and guidance on the expansion of spatial conservation.</p>	<p>The assessment of coherence of HELCOM MPAs is completed by 2025. (Joint supporting action)</p>

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	<p>By 2027 the results from the coherence assessment are to be used to take appropriate actions to ensure conservation and resilience of biodiversity, and to identify possible spatial conservation expansion needs to improve coherence.</p> <p>National/Joint</p>		<p>Autumn 2023: scope the need for improving the assessment methodology, as well as establish data requirements.</p> <p>2024: Provide guidance on methodology development as needed., .</p> <p>2025: review the results of the assessment and the associated report.</p> <p>2027-2030: Once the assessment is available the WG is to share information on how CPs are taking action to improve coherence.</p>	<p>Possible spatial conservation expansion to improve coherence are identified by 2027. (National measure)</p> <p>The HELCOM MPA network is fully coherent including with respect to adequacy, connectivity (incl. migration), replication and representativity, taking into account the changing climate, in 2030. (Joint measures)</p>
7	<p>Concretize how the MPA network is and/or could contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change.</p>	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC Responsible: WG BioDiv Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Interlinked activities: climate change fact sheet (EN Clime), ecosystem service work (EG ESA, HOLAS)</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will work with ecosystem service provisioning, species distribution under various climate scenarios, resilience proxies. EG MPA to support the work through review and guidance processes, as needed, including how restoration can be used to improve the mitigation potential of spatial protection measures.</p>	<p>By 2028 present clear indication of the current and future potential of MPAs to contribute to mitigation of the effects of climate change (type and magnitude of contribution).</p>
8	<p>Improve 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.</p>	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC Responsible: WG BioDiv Contributing: EG MPA</p> <p>Interlinked activities: MSP4BIO, BLUE4All</p>	<p>2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC and BLUE4All will progress the work on ecosystem service provisioning, distribution, and valuation.</p> <p>EG MPA to support the work in PROTECT through guidance and review processes, as needed.</p>	<p>By 2028 provide clear indication of current and future potential of MPAs to contribute to provisioning of ecosystem service (type and magnitude of contribution), as well as the value associated with the services.</p>

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9	Identification and establishment of regional governance for protection in the Baltic Sea	Lead: PROTECT BALTIC Responsible: WG BioDiv Contributing: EG MPA	EG MPA to support the implementation of the MPA governance flowchart, based on guidance from WG BioDiv, including the establishment of a common understanding and vocabulary with regards to spatial protection terminology (including definitions on strict protection under HELCOM).	Regional governance for protection in the Baltic Sea established
Topic: Management of spatial protection				
10	BSAP B3: By 2030 strengthen the management of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network by introducing key elements into management efforts, including but not limited to those highlighted here, to increase effectiveness of protection, including by providing support to Baltic Sea MPA managers through capacity building e.g., through annual workshops. By 2023 update, and by 2025, apply HELCOM MPA management guidelines with focus on: a) Assessments and evaluation methodology and structures for management effectiveness; b) Setting quantitative conservation objectives; c) Effective conservation measures that reduce pressures; d) Establishment of indicators to monitor management performance and status of conservation features;	Lead: PROTECT BALTIC/Germany Responsible: WG BioDiv Contributing: MPA MaNet, EG MPA Interlinked activities: S64 (WG Sea-based pressures) S42 (WG Fish), S47 (WG Fish), S54 (WG Fish), S57 (WG Seabased)	2023-2028: this work will be progressed using the PROTECT BALTIC as a platform, but in close cooperation with BIODIV WG. Due to a necessary change in the timeline for the work under the PROTECT BALTIC project the target year for updated Management Guidelines will not be met, however work will be underway. Autumn 2023: find a host and begin the planning of the 2024 MPA managers network capacity building WS. Autumn 2024: find a host and begin the planning of the 2025 MPA managers network capacity building WS. 2028: MPA Management guidelines updated, EG MPA to review.	2023 workshop for MPA managers carried out, contributing to building capacity. 2024 workshop for MPA managers carried out, contributing to building capacity. By 2023 the HELCOM Guidelines for MPA Management are updated. By 2025 the HELCOM MPA Management Guidelines are applied. By 2030 improved key elements are introduced into MPA management to increase the effectiveness of protection.

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	<p>e) Establishment of a common monitoring strategy and evaluation of conservation features and pressures;</p> <p>f) Adaptive management.</p>			
11	<p>Establish coordination mechanisms for management of pressures and impacts on MPAs, in particular for adjacent transnational MPAs</p>	<p>Lead:</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA, MPA MaNet</p> <p>Interlinked activities: PROTECT BALTIC</p>	<p>Spring 2024: WG BioDiv to scope needs and requirements for a coordination mechanism and prepare a proposal.</p> <p>Autumn 2024: include an agreed way forward in the updated work plan.</p> <p>2023-2028 PROTECT BALTIC project will produce regional overviews of the spatial distribution of pressures and impacts inside and outside of MPAs, as well as divide pressures into direct and indirect, directing how to these should be handled, as well as provide impact analysis for the various ecosystem components existing in and/or included in the conservation objectives of the MPAs (both adjacent transnational ones and others)</p>	<p>By end of 2024: Clear next steps agreed and included in next WP update.</p> <p>By 2027: Transnational coordination mechanism established.</p>
12	<p>Increase capacity for developing multi-management plans for marine protected areas.</p>	<p>Lead: PROTECT BALTIC</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA, MPA MaNet</p>	<p>Autumn 2024: Arrange a MPA managers capacity building WS, in association with MPA MaNet, on the process, experiences and best practices of developing multi-management plans.</p> <p>EG MPA to identify good examples of multi-management plans and provide contact information for practitioners who have been involved in the development and implementation of</p>	<p>By end of 2024: Based on a targeted workshop for the MPA managers network, increased familiarity with the development and establishment process.</p> <p>By end of 2024: Based on a targeted workshop for the MPA managers network, established connections between managers and experienced practitioners.</p>

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			<p>multi-management plans to join the WS and present.</p> <p>2023-2028 PROTECT BALTIC: Include guidance on developing multi management plans in the update of the HELCOM MPA management manual</p>	By end of 2028: Chapter on multi management plans in the update of the HELCOM MPA management manual.
14	Contribute to and guide the development of biodiversity and ecosystem related regional monitoring guidelines.	<p>Lead: On a need basis.</p> <p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p>	2023-2028: PROTECT BALTIC will review monitoring methods for monitoring of pressures and biodiversity in MPAs, but which are possibly also relevant for monitoring overall and could be used to support the review/development of monitoring guidelines. EG MPA to support the work through providing guidance to the project and review project products.	New monitoring guidelines for biodiversity and protection available when relevant.
15	Contribute to and support the development of biodiversity indicators for area-based marine conservation.	<p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Contributing: EG MPA</p>	<p>EG MPA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support the work on developing indicators in PROTECT BALTIC through identifying how to optimally link indicator to direct MPA measures and a subsequent change in state. - prioritize proposed indicators based on functionality and data availability. - identify data gaps in relation to monitoring and indicators for spatial protection. 	Indicators for area-based marine conservation developed.
16	Explore how spatial protection and restoration could be better integrated into the HOLAS assessments.	<p>Responsible: WG BioDiv</p> <p>Lead: EG MPA</p>	Spring/autumn 2024: following the post-HOLAS 3 review process, consider and propose how spatial protection and restoration could be better included in	2025: Proposal for how to improve the integration and inclusion of spatial protection in HOLAS processes finalized and presented to WG BioDiv.

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			future assessments of the state of the Baltic Sea.	
17	Support the work of PROTECT BALTIC to prepare the restoration Action Plan and the associated toolbox.	Responsible: WG BioDiv Lead: EG MPA	EG MPA to help identify best practices and, if needed, prioritize practices and examples for inclusion in the restoration toolbox.	2025: Restoration Action Plan and toolbox prepared.
18	Support the implementation and work in HELCOM in relation to international commitments related to spatial protection.	Responsible: WG BioDiv Lead: EG MPA	Spring 2024: Identify what international commitments are relevant for spatial protection work in HELCOM. Autumn 2024: Check the synergies of current HELCOM work in relation to the identified other international commitments, with regards to spatial conservation.	2024: links between HELCOM spatial conservation work and other international commitments established and cross-referencing of ongoing work with the requirements under the identified commitments.