



Workplan of the HELCOM Expert Group on Foodwebs (HELCOM EG Foodweb), 2025-2026

Approved by the HELCOM Working Group on Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration via correspondence in June 2025.

No	Task	Lead, responsible bodies and interlinked activities	Next steps and comments	Output
Theme: Information flow (cooperation with other organizations and relevant project/initiatives)				
1	Ensuring information flow with other HELCOM subsidiary bodies, regional projects as well as beyond (i.e. OSPAR, EU WG GES, JRC)	Lead: EG Foodweb with support of the Secretariat Responsible: EG Foodweb	<p>Agenda point during EG Foodweb meetings.</p> <p>2025: Germany to provide an update on the meta-analysis of Ecological Network Analysis indices for consideration by the group on using the approach for HOLAS 4.</p> <p>Q4 2025 / Q1 2026: agenda item during a meeting of EG Foodweb on joint discussion between OSPAR and HELCOM EG FOODWEBS aiming to share experiences between the two regions.</p> <p>Relevant HELCOM Expert Groups: EG PHYTO, EG ZOO, EG BENTHIC, EG MaMa, FISH WG, JWG Bird, EG Pelagic, etc.</p>	Operational information flow to use the best information available to support HOLAS 4 (and future HOLASs).

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2	Share information about the joint ICES/HELCOM Working Group on Integrated Assessment of the Baltic Sea (WGIAB) and links to other ICES work.	Lead: EG Foodweb with support of the Secretariat Responsible: EG Foodweb	Agenda point during EG Foodweb meetings.	Operational information flow to use the best information available to support HOLAS 4 (and future HOLASs).
Theme: General aspect of food web assessment				
3	Suggest approach to food web assessment	Co-leads: Germany and Sweden with the support of EG Foodweb and the Secretariat Responsible: EG Foodweb	<p>This task builds on results from other tasks and covers a variety of approaches including e.g. indicator based assessment, ITA, food web models and qualitative assessment.</p> <p>The task is developed in iteration with other tasks of the workplan.</p> <p>2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countries to present national initiatives to link food web assessment to the design of measures / programme of measures; - Secretariat to inform the group on potential test case(s) under HOLAS 4 on synergies between holistic assessment and management perspectives; 	Plan for a food web assessment for HOLAS 4 that is regional coherent and supports national assessments.

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			<p>2025-2026: Regular agenda point on regional understanding of trophic guilds, in line with EU MSFD (D4C1 and C2).</p> <p>2026: WG BioDiv to consider the approach developed by the group.</p>	
Theme: Data for food web assessment				
4	<p>Identify and assess data and data products and their suitability to support food web analysis at a coherent temporal and spatial scale (based on issue A of HOLAS RevDev)</p>	<p>Lead: Secretariat with the support of EG Foodweb Responsible: Interlinked activities: OSPAR EG Foodweb, ICES WGIAB, ICES WGEcoHub, ICES WGINOSE.</p>	<p>As soon as possible, the Secretariat will inform EG Foodweb on data collection process for HOLAS 4.</p> <p>2026: cooperation with all relevant HELCOM Expert Groups to initiate the process on additional data needs not covered by HOLAS 4.</p>	<p>Overview of data needs to ensure smooth data collection in Q1 2027.</p> <p>Long-term: operational data flows to support food web assessment.</p> <p>For HOLAS 4 products: highlight the needs of pursuing monitoring.</p>
5	<p>Support the integration of diet information in food web assessment.</p> <p>Diet data and information is required for both justifying linking different trophic levels/guilds/taxa and interpretation of food web assessment outcomes.</p>	<p>Lead: Germany with the support of the Secretariat. Estonia to co-lead activities related to identifying gaps. Responsible: Interlinked activities: OSPAR/CEFAS and ICES</p>	<p>Q4 2025: countries will be invited to share information on available data related to diets to produce a review of available information. The diet data should be considered coming from monitoring programs and dedicated research surveys and laboratory experiments.</p> <p>2026: identify gaps.</p>	<p>Data on diet composition and trophic niches interaction available for future work / next workplan.</p>

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	(based on issue D of HOLAS RevDev)		<p>2026: Collate data and information on diets for possible supporting information in HOLAS 4, such as a test case. The test case would highlight the importance of collecting data on diets.</p> <p>2025: exploring possibilities.</p> <p>2026: implement data harvesting.</p>	<p>Identification of knowledge gaps with suggested way forward to reduce the limitation.</p> <p>Supporting information for HOLAS 4 products, to be confirmed.</p>
Theme: Models and indicators				
6	Food web models development and upkeep (partly issue C of HOLAS RevDev)	<p>Lead: Sweden with support of EG Foodweb</p> <p>Responsible:</p> <p>Interlinked activities: JRC, ICES WGEcoHub, ICES WGSAM, ICES WGIAB, ICES WGINOSE</p>	Agenda point during EG Foodweb meetings on sharing information relevant research projects (utilizing information from task 1).	2026: Recommendation on how to integrate food web models in HELCOM work.
7	Indicator development and selection for HOLAS 4 (based on issue B of HOLAS RevDev)	<p>Co-leads: Germany and Finland with the support of the Secretariat</p> <p>Responsible:</p> <p>Interlinked activities: OSPAR EG Foodweb, ICES WGIAB, ICES WGEcoHub, ICES WGINOSE</p>	<p>Regular task: building on previous work of the group (HOLAS 3).</p> <p>2026: review by WG BioDiv and endorsement by WG BioDiv.</p> <p>2025 and 2026: consideration of use of assessment results in management / policy perspective.</p> <p>Q4 2026: approval by HOD if applicable.</p>	<p>Indicator concept to be used for HOLAS 4.</p> <p>Perspective for food web indicator for management.</p>
Theme: Funding				

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8	Sharing up-to-date information on funding opportunities to support the development work (e.g. models and indicators) needed towards food web assessment	Lead: EG Foodweb and Secretariat Responsible: Interlinked activities:	Regular agenda point during meetings on sharing information. The Secretariat will also share relevant funding opportunities with the group by correspondence.	Operational information flow aiming to potential project application and funding.