



Workplan of the HELCOM Expert Group on Zooplankton (HELCOM EG Zoo), 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: Monitoring				
1	BSAP HT6 Regularly review, and as necessary revise HELCOM monitoring programmes (once per six years), including the level of regional coordination, in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) reporting cycle, to adjust them to the latest technical and scientific developments for a cost-effective joint monitoring, which fully supports the indicator-based assessment approach and monitoring of the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, and is in line with other international monitoring and reporting requirements	Lead: EG Zoo (development and proposals on updating of zooplankton monitoring programme) with the support of the Secretariat EG Zoo: Responsible: WG GEAR	Overall process is higher level than EG Zoo. EG Zoo will contribute to the process initiated under WG GEAR. By 2026: regular work of EG Zoo: updating list of monitoring stations including coastal stations. The list is available on the dedicated EG Zoo workplace.	Updated zooplankton monitoring programme (if needed, 2024). Inventory of existing coastal monitoring stations to address assessment at scale 3 for zooplankton.
2	Work towards the development of new zooplankton approaches for monitoring	Lead: EG Zoo Responsible: EG Zoo	Regular process: - Sharing knowledge on imaging and molecular methods for zooplankton monitoring via presentations by MS laboratories/projects currently evaluating the application of	Identifying possibilities for application/collaboration. Updated zooplankton monitoring guideline (if needed).

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			<p>imaging techniques and eDNA for zooplankton community analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring possibilities for alternative preservations methods. <p>Autumn 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of new monitoring methods by the countries. - further planning of a potential dedicated workshop on the use of eDNA methods. - consider the planning of a possible workshop on the use of imaging techniques for zooplankton identification and enumeration. 	
3	Intercalibrations as means of quality assurance should be organized, when financing is available, to keep the high standard of zooplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea, to assure the comparability of results	<p>Lead: Germany, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania (tentatively)</p> <p>Responsible: WG/EG</p>	<p>Explore funding possibilities to use third-party agencies/companies to assist with the intercalibrations activities by end of 2025.</p> <p>Financial support for this activity is highly needed.</p> <p>Q4 2025: discussion on the relevance to propose a HELCOM funded project to amplify the regional coordination of zooplankton monitoring.</p>	Plan for intercalibration exercise (including e.g. project proposal, training courses, etc.).
4	Maintain regular training on taxonomy and other issues relevant for zooplankton work (e.g. sampling, biomass determination) to maintain	<p>Lead: EG Zoo</p> <p>Responsible: EG Zoo</p>	Training session on taxonomy to be organized back-to-back to EG Zoo meetings in spring 2026.	Sharing skills on taxonomy and other relevant technical aspects.

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	and improve the quality of monitoring data		Regular work: EG Zoo will produce a wish list of taxa/topics to be considered by the training sessions. Discussion in 2026 on the possibility to organize a physical training session.	Available materials to be made publicly available for educational purposes.
5	Maintain a common procedure to maintain a joint list of Baltic zooplankton species for all subregions	Lead: EG Zoo with technical support of the Secretariat Responsible: WG/EG Interlinked activities: JEG NIS	Regular task: EG Zoo nominated contacts can access and edit the lists of species on the EG Zoo dedicated workspace . EG Zoo to review new species added during meetings of the group, if changes were added.	Joint list of Baltic zooplankton species up-to-date.
6	Monitoring of micro-zooplankton	Lead: EG Zoo Responsible: EG Zoo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2025: Utilize the information on how micro-zooplankton species are possibly monitored by EG Phyto to define potential cooperation - Autumn 2025: Countries to share national experiences on technical aspects and discussion on how regional coordination is possible - 2025/2026: Defining the next steps, if relevant, to establish a regional cooperation for micro-zooplankton monitoring. 	<p>During 2026: joint view on how to establish a regional cooperation related to the monitoring of micro-zooplankton.</p> <p>Correspondence with WG BioDiv, if needed, to recommend next steps.</p>
Theme: Data				
7	Continuation of operational dataflows to provide all relevant data for indicators assessment in HOLAS 4	Lead: EG Zoo Responsible:	Maintaining current operational dataflows.	Operational data flows, data timely reported for HOLAS 4

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Theme: Indicators				
8	<p>Further develop understanding of links to pressures (issue H of HOLAS RevDev)</p> <p>Supporting BSAP B33: By 2024 develop a roadmap to fill gaps to enable a holistic assessment for all relevant ecosystem components and pressures and, by 2030 at the latest, develop and fully operationalise a set of indicators fulfilling HELCOM's needs, including the need to provide a regional platform for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (joint).</p>	<p>Lead: EG Zoo to provide input on zooplankton indicators and data needs (work to be led by EG Pelagic, to be confirmed)</p> <p>Responsible: WG/EG.</p>	2025-2026: Regular agenda point during EG Zoo meetings.	Clear input from EG Zoo on zooplankton and trophic ecology
9	Interpreting trends for coastal areas	<p>Lead: EG Zoo with input from Poland and Finland (to be confirmed)</p> <p>Responsible:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q3/Q4 2025: Poland and other countries (i.e. Finland, to be confirmed) will present information on this topic during a meeting of the group. - EG Zoo will continue discussing on to develop and interpret trends for coastal areas. - By 2026: EG Zoo is developing a plan to potentially add this topic in HOLAS 4 / next HOLAS. 	Consideration to have contextual information for HOLAS 4. WG BioDiv and HOD to be informed.
10	Examine/evaluate how the current indicators signal food web factors / evaluate the status of food webs to	<p>Lead: EG FOODWEB with the support of EG Zoo and the Secretariat</p> <p>Responsible: WG/EG</p>	- 2025: discussions on the relevance and means to address zooplankton component in food webs.	- Contribution to EG Foodweb work

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	support BSAP B34 (issue B of HOLAS RevDev).		assessment / joint discussion with EG Foodweb	
11	BSAP HT1: Using the HELCOM/Baltic Earth Joint Expert Network on Climate Change as a platform and through committed implementation of the HELCOM Science Agenda, improve the access of policy-makers to scientific information on the impacts of climate change together with multiple other pressures on the Baltic Sea marine environment through periodic updates of the HELCOM Climate Change Fact Sheet, and incorporate the possible effect of climate change into the holistic assessment of status as well as effectiveness of measures by 2030 at latest (joint).	Lead: EG Zoo with the support of the Secretariat Responsible: WG/EG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q3/Q4 2025: Presentation by Finland and other countries to EG Zoo on climate-related variables (salinity and temperature) to initiate discussion on the climate as a driver of zooplankton-based indicators. - Q3/Q4 2025: The Secretariat will inform the group on the work of EN Clime and how climate change will be covered in the HOLAS 4 indicator report. 	<p>Q3/Q4 2025: EG Zoo is initiating discussion on this topic</p> <p>2026: Initiating discussion on how to include relevant information on climate change in HOLAS indicator report.</p>
12	Further develop zooplankton MSTs indicator (issue D of HOLAS RevDev)	Lead: indicator Lead with contribution of EG Zoo (specifically Denmark, Germany, Poland and Sweden)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2025: Initial discussion with Denmark, Germany, Poland and Sweden to assess how the indicator could use spring instead of summer data to make operational the indicators in missing areas (i.e. Southerly and South-Western areas). -Regular agenda point during EG Zoo meetings and regular communication to WG BioDiv for information. 	Updated and operational indicator

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			-Q2 2026: developments shared with WG BioDiv and HOD for consideration/approval	
Theme: Assessment (pelagic and food webs)				
13	Need for an EG Pelagic raised and initiation of work, for example by developing functional group analysis as overarching pelagic assessment (issues A and I of HOLAS RevDev)	Lead: EG Zoo, EG Phyto with the support of the Secretariat Responsible: WG BioDiv and HOD levels for decision and guidance	- 2025: Update of EG Zoo Terms of Reference in line with potential new EG Pelagic	Operational EG Pelagic with contribution of EG Zoo and other relevant EGs (e.g. EG Zoo, EG Foodweb, etc.)
14	Evaluate and harmonize, if needed, zooplankton biomass assessment	Lead: Responsible: WG/EG	- Intersessional discussion during spring 2025 between Denmark and Sweden and presentation of outcomes during autumn meeting of EG Zoo - Autumn 2025: presentation on the use of different biomass calculation approaches during EG Zoo meeting in autumn 2025 - Autumn 2025: discussion on revising, if needed, carbon conversion factor Task to continue in the future.	2025: Recommendations to WG BioDiv for changes in biomass assessment, if needed. Lead to be confirmed in 2025 if additional work is needed. 2026: approval by HOD
15	Evaluate possibility to harmonise scale at which zooplankton and phytoplankton are evaluated (based on issue C of HOLAS RevDev)	Lead: Indicators lead, EG Zoo and EG Phyto Responsible: WG/EG	2025/2026: - cooperation between EG Zoo and EG Phyto - regular discussion for future work / HOLAS 5	Aim to have operational and harmonized assessment scale for zooplankton and phytoplankton for HOLAS 5
16	Revisit and review the integrated assessment to determine if there are needs for development (issue K of HOLAS RevDev)	Lead: Finland with support of EG Zoo Responsible:	- 2026: agenda point on regular meeting of EG Zoo	Q3/Q4 2026: consideration by WG BioDiv and potential approval by HOD in Q4 2026 on new methods / updated indicators

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Theme: Information flow				
17	Compile a list of relevant scientific articles for the group to support its work.	Lead: EG Zoo with support of the Secretariat Responsible: Interlinked activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2025: initiating a compilation of relevant scientific articles to be used by the group. The group will be informed on how to access the list on the EG Zoo dedicated workspace - 2025-2026: update of the list prior to the meetings of EG Zoo and review of the list during the meetings. 	List of relevant scientific articles available to the contacts of EG Zoo.
18	Presentation of HOLAS 3 products and methods used for the indicator on zooplankton	Lead: Chair of EG Zoo with support of the Secretariat Responsible: Interlinked activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autumn session of 2025. 	Information shared among the contacts of EG Zoo on what to expect for HOLAS 4, utilizing HOLAS 3 as reference.