

Progress Report on the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 - 2020



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Guidance: Please provide any updates since the 18th GMRS held in 2016 up to date

I. Progress in the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 -2020 since 2017 up to date

1. Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in line with the SDG Goal 14.1.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
1.1	Enhance data, information management, monitoring and assessment at national and regional level through development of guidelines, baselines, regional indicators, and monitoring programmes as well as identification of region-specific emerging issues through research	<p>State of the Baltic Sea – Second HELCOM holistic assessment 2011-2016</p> <p>The holistic assessment was a joint effort of a broad range of expert from all Baltic Sea region countries to assess the state of the Baltic Sea for the period 2011-2016.</p>	<p>State of the Baltic Sea report provides an update on the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea for the period 2011–2016.</p> <p>The report highlights a broad range of aspects, covering the state of the ecosystem, environmental pressures and human well-being. Some results are based on the achievements of long-term HELCOM monitoring and assessment, whereas others are presented regionally for the first time. HELCOM core indicators form the basis for the assessment. The indicators assess the status of selected elements of biodiversity and human-induced pressures on the Baltic Sea against regionally agreed threshold values, based on current knowledge and available data for the assessment. In addition, integrated assessments for biodiversity, eutrophication and contamination status are made, based on the core indicators. The results show that, although signs of improvement in the state of the Baltic Sea are seen in</p>	06/2018

		some cases, the Baltic Sea Action Plan goals and ecological objectives have not yet been reached. http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/	
	HELCOM project on the assessment of maritime activities in the Baltic Sea	HELCOM Maritime Assessment 2018 provides an assessment of the status, environmental risks and opportunities of maritime activities in the Baltic Sea region http://www.helcom.fi/Lists/Publications/BSEP152.pdf	03/2018
	Development of HELCOM core indicators	Threshold values have been adopted or revised for various core indicators including 'Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and dioxin and furan', 'Polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and their metabolites' and 'TBT and imposex', 'Cyanobacterial blooms index', 'Total nitrogen (TN)', 'Total phosphorous (TP)', 'State of soft-bottom macrofauna community', 'Metals', 'Oxygen debt', 'PBDEs in sediments' and 'Zooplankton MSTs'. Work plan for future work on HELCOM indicators was approved in 2018.	2016-2019
	Updating guidelines on monitoring and data collection	Several guidelines on monitoring and data collection have been created or updated http://www.helcom.fi/action-areas/monitoring-and-assessment/manuals-and-guidelines/	2016-2019
	Development of thematic guidelines and regional database on underwater noise	Regional database on underwater noise was set up jointly with OSPAR. http://www.ices.dk/marine-data/data-portals/Pages/underwater-noise.aspx	2018
	Updating HELCOM data and information strategy	Data and information strategy http://www.helcom.fi/action-areas/monitoring-and-assessment/monitoring-and-assessment-strategy/	2019
	Coherent Linear Infrastructures in Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans (BalticLines)	Platform for accessing spatial data related to maritime spatial plans in the Baltic http://basemaps.helcom.fi/	02/2019

		http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/projects/baltic-lines/		
		Further development of HELCOM map and data service	Renewed HELCOM Map and data service http://maps.helcom.fi/website/mapservice/	
		HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea Species (BalticCheck) project http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/projects/balticheck/	Biodiversity database https://maps.helcom.fi/website/biodiversity/	07/2019
1.2	Raise the visibility of relevant pollution issues at all levels and facilitate science-policy interactions emphasizing socio-economic impacts and promoting relevant practices, tools, technologies and measures	Including socio-economic analysis in the HELCOM second holistic assessment	Report: Economic and social analyses in the Baltic Sea Region http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/humans-and-the-ecosystem/	06/2018
1.3	Raise issues at global level and facilitate regionalization of outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and mandated global partnerships	Sharing experiences within Sustainable Ocean Initiative	Ongoing activity	Ongoing
		Engaging in the Second World Ocean Assessment via providing expertise to the writing teams and pool of experts, participation in WOA II workshops and offering synthesized information for the use in the assessment	Ongoing activity	Ongoing
		Voluntary commitments to the UN Ocean conference 2017	https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=17174 https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18382 https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=15614	06/2017

2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
2.1	Support mainstreaming of climate change into regional and national policies and institutional frameworks	HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 agreed to increase HELCOM's preparedness to respond to climate change impacts, by taking foreseen climate change impacts into account when updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan and by exploring the needs and possibilities to further adapt HELCOM's policies and recommendations 1) in line with existing objectives of protection of the marine environment and sustainable use of marine resources, also under the changing climate, and 2) to maximise the capacity of the Baltic Sea ecosystem to contribute to mitigation of climate change through blue carbon storage;	Ongoing activity	2021
2.2	Assess the impacts of climate change and the resilience of people, society and ecosystems in marine and coastal areas to propose adaptation strategies			

2.3	Create or support climate research, policy networks and inter-regional knowledge exchange towards a better understanding of climate impacts on the marine and coastal environment	HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 emphasized the need to further strengthen the scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change together with multiple other stressors on the Baltic Sea marine environment and agreed that HELCOM should take action to bridge this knowledge to policy and practice.	Establishment of the joint Expert Network on Climate Change (EN CLIME) by HELCOM and Baltic Earth	2019
2.4	Facilitate access to instruments for climate financing at national and regional levels			

3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
3.1	Promote application of guidelines, rules and	Facilitating data availability and coherence of MSP, as well as transboundary cooperation under national/regional MSP consultations.	Guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure	2019

<p>regulations for exploitation and exploration of living and non-living resources within Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and develop such instruments, where necessary, based on the ecosystem approach</p>	<p>PanBaltic Scope http://www.panbalticscope.eu/</p>	<p>Method for analysing and assessing cumulative impacts of MSP</p>	<p>2019</p>
	<p>Designating Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea</p> <p>The Baltic EBSA workshop was held on 20–24 February 2018, in Helsinki, Finland, hosted by Finland and with financial support by Finland and Sweden. Nine EBSAs in the Baltic Sea were described by the workshop. Five of these areas are transboundary areas, covering waters of two or more countries. Altogether, the described EBSAs cover 23% of the Baltic Sea waters.</p>	<p>The report of the Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of EBSAs in the Baltic Sea (EBSA workshop) was reviewed at the CBD Twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 22), 2-7 July 2018 in Montreal. Subsequently the report was forwarded to the Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 14), 17-29 November 2018, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, where the identified areas were considered and the meeting requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to include the summary reports in the EBSA repository, and to submit them to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and its relevant processes, as well as Parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations.</p>	

4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
4.1	Support science-policy dialogue, science-based decisions and provision of regional guidelines	Cooperation with BONUS (joint Baltic Sea research and development programme) and BANOS CSA (Baltic and North Sea Coordination and Support Action, constituted of major research and innovation funds and organizations from 12 countries, as well as of four transnational bodies – HELCOM, ICES, JPI Oceans, and OSPAR)	Ongoing activity Joint BONUS-HELCOM Conference 2018: Research and Innovation for Sustainability	Ongoing
		State of the Baltic Sea – Second HELCOM holistic assessment 2011-2016	State of the Baltic Sea report provides the background for updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan	06/2018 and ongoing
4.2	Support member states with developing integrated ocean policy and improve relevant national legislation to enhance chronological consistency and coherency across sectors	Adopting and updating HELCOM Recommendations	Ongoing activity List of HELCOM Recommendations: http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/recommendations/	Ongoing
		HELCOM High-level Segment 2017 agreed that the Contracting Parties coordinate the regional implementation of ocean-related SDGs in the Baltic Sea using the HELCOM platform	Ongoing activity	Ongoing

4.3	Enhance information exchange and interregional cooperation towards common goals	Information exchange is an ongoing activity in the HELCOM Working Groups and expert groups	Ongoing activity Various reports to take stock of the most recent information have been published: http://www.helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/publications	Ongoing
4.4	Encourage multi-stakeholder participation including NGOs and the private sector to promote compliance with Regional Seas instruments, existing guidelines and regulations of ocean management	HELCOM Observers are invited to HELCOM meetings and events (HELCOM has 19 IGOs and 42 NGOs as Observers)	Ongoing activity	Ongoing
4.5	Ensure the highest standards of Secretariat performance in support in administration of the Conventions and Action plan	n/a (HELCOM is a non-UN administered RSC)		

II. Challenges with the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 – 2020

The Helsinki Convention is independent of UN and sets its own strategic targets. However, the HELCOM priorities are well aligned with the Regional Seas Strategic Directions.

III. Lessons learnt (2017 – up to date)

n/a (HELCOM is a non-UN administered RSC)

IV. Any other issues / decisions / case studies / experiences to be shared

Sturgeon Action Plan

The HELCOM Action Plan for the Protection and Recovery of Baltic sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus*, adopted in 2019, aims to prevent the Baltic sturgeon from full extinction, and in the mid-term, to re-establish viable populations of the Baltic sturgeon in the same areas where it was historically found. It suggests effective protection measures and can therefore guide HELCOM and the Baltic Sea States to meet their commitments arising from the BSAP, as well as under other international agreements (e.g. the Bern and Bonn Conventions, CBD targets, and for EU Member States, the Habitats Directive).

New HELCOM Recommendation on conservation of biotopes and habitats

In 2018 significant progress was made to finalize the new HELCOM Recommendation on threatened biotopes and the Recommendation was finally adopted at 40th meeting of the Helsinki Commission in early 2019. The Recommendation recognizes that the threatened Baltic Sea habitats and biotopes may not be covered by existing regulations and can therefore require protection beyond the scope of existing measures in order to achieve the Aichi Targets, the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), and, for EU Member States, the aims of the MSFD and Water Framework Directive (WFD). It also provides guidance on concrete ways that the Baltic Sea countries can use to ensure that threatened biotopes in their area recover and thrive.

Monitoring guidelines for marine litter on beaches and continuous noise

Monitoring guidelines for marine litter on beaches and continuous noise have been adopted in 2018. Furthermore, the HELCOM countries also agreed on the monitoring sub-programme for continuous noise. Work is on-going on arrangements for hosting of indicator data for continuous noise. Countries keep on annually reporting data to the [registry](#) of impulsive licensed events. To ease the process the reporting format to the OSPAR-HELCOM registry of underwater noise was updated in 2018.

Targets for underwater noise

Effects of noise on the level of population are still very poorly understood, and good status for populations in relation to underwater noise has therefore not yet been defined. To guide further work, after a long and constructive discussion process, HELCOM agreed, in 2018, on the “HELCOM input to the process of establishing environmental targets for underwater noise”. The HELCOM input is to serve as regional input to other fora, including other Regional Sea Conventions as well as European processes.

V Emerging issues that have not been covered in the RSSD 2017-2020 but are proposed to be covered during the next RSSD

n/a (HELCOM is a non-UN administered RSC)

*Please submit this report to Nancy Soi at Nancy.soi@un.org by **30 August 2019**