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Background

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 offers support to coordinators of the policy areas (PAs) and horizontal actions (Has) of the EUSBSR to carry their tasks as set in the Action Plan of the EUSBSR and to bring value added, i.e. supporting implementation of coordination activities that would not have been possible without the Programme co-financing or activities related to implementation of common priorities with the partner countries and broadening of the policy discussion in the region. The funding is granted following successful evaluation of the submitted applications.

This document briefly informs on activities carried out by HELCOM and VASAB, co-coordinators of HA Spatial Planning, with the support of the Baltic Sea Region Programme Technical Assistance grant for HA Spatial Planning (HA Spatial Planning Support (HASPS)). See also additional information on hired persons in document 2-1 of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 11-2015.

HELCOM and VASAB will submit an application for the 2nd call for PAC/HAC support in February 2016.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information on the activities by the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats in support of the goals and objectives of the HA Spatial Planning.

The Contracting Parties/Member States may wish to provide comments to the AIS data explorer tool developed by HELCOM.

HA Spatial Planning Support activities

HELCOM and VASAB are co-coordinators of Horizontal Action (HA) Spatial Planning of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG acts as the steering committee for the HA Spatial Planning concerning MSP issues. Both Secretariats assist the WG in this role, by e.g. keeping the group informed of activities related to the (EUSBSR) and HA Spatial Planning (such as funding opportunities and meetings) and representing the HA in various meetings and processes as needed.

In order to increase a knowledge and visibility of HA Spatial Planning, HA Spatial Planning has been presented in 2nd and 3rd meeting of EUBSR National Coordinators and Policy Area/Horizontal Action Coordinators in Warsaw, Poland by introducing to the HA Spatial Planning coordination activities and related projects. HA Spatial Planning has been represented in the Baltic SCOPE project kick-off event, EC Conference "Drivers for Blue Growth in the Baltic Sea Region", the Joint Meeting on climate change adaptation (CBSS/HA CLIMATE), EUSBSR seminar "Positive change in the Baltic Sea region", VASAB CSPD/BSR and HELCOM meetings. HA Spatial Planning is also planned to be presented during spring 2016 e.g. at the European Maritime Day.

One of the HA Spatial Planning tasks is to facilitate new project development. Recently, a letter of support for MSP & BSR Integrated Maritime Heritage Management project proposal has been issued for the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility, according to the established procedure.

For the communication and information sharing, HELCOM and VASAB web pages on HA Spatial Planning and MSP are continuously updated. The brochure about HA Spatial Planning, its activities and related projects has been updated and printed by VASAB.

In order to achieve the goal of the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap (*to draw up and apply maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea Region by 2020 which are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach*), VASAB and HELCOM has established the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group (MSP Data Expert sub-group) as a sub-group to the joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group for a period of two years, i.e. until the end of 2016.

HASPS has facilitated the group meetings - two BSR MSP Data group meetings have been held in 1-2nd October 2015 in Riga, Latvia and 10-20th January 2016 in Hamburg, Germany. Other two meetings (supported by HASPS) will be carried out by mid of 2016.

The MSP data sharing has also been facilitated with HASPS support through the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group as well as other HELCOM groups and projects.

Cross-border MSP data work in HELCOM

HELCOM, with its versatile work around environment, improves the cohesion of the Baltic Sea wide work for the commodity of working groups. Lately, many activities related to spatial data has been undertaken in HELCOM. These activities around the spatial data suits for applying the data and information for practical work. Spatial planning with its need for coherent spatial data is one point breaking topic, where HELCOM, though its activities, can add value on cross-border MSP.

Through HASPS, support has been provided to the regional MSP work on data, and more specifically to contribute to the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group meetings, to create a regional list of MSP relevant human activities and to develop tools for improving access to shipping data (AIS) for regional MSP.

I. Listing of MSP-relevant human activities

One of the activities of fall 2015 was collation of information and sources on regional spatial datasets and their potential use for MSP and HELCOM assessments. Several regional datasets on human activities and uses as well as pressures were identified for several purposes, MSP as one. Regional list of both human activities and uses as well as pressures occurring in the Baltic Sea area was derived and is ready for publishing. Forming

of a regional list of human activities/uses and pressures for the Baltic Sea will serve both MSP and environmental assessment needs. This list could also give insight to the future development of the marine use. A regional list provides a level of consistency in how the human uses and activities are assessed and provide a framework for the collection and sharing of information and monitoring.

Together with information collation, activities enhancing visibility and visualisation of MSP relevant datasets has been undertaken, whereas HELCOM MSP data sharing has been promoted through the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group. The Data Expert group has also established a network of MSP Data contact points for transnational consultations.

II.HELCOM AIS Explorer
A comprehensive regional window to ship traffic for MSP planners

As part of the HASPS activities, HELCOM is developing a web based tool for browsing and accessing HELCOM AIS data 2005-15 on ship movements in the Baltic Sea, which is also intuitive for users which are not maritime experts -especially maritime spatial planners.

The HELCOM AIS system was established by a decision of the HELCOM Meeting of Ministers of Transport in 2001 and has generated a very large dataset on ship movements in the Baltic Sea region from the period 2005-15. However, complexity and overwhelming size of the data is a key bottleneck in mobilising this information for users outside the maritime community, such as MSP planners and on regional scale.

The assumption is that MSP planners need the possibility to explore ship traffic data for details such as movement patterns of specific size classes, ship types, effects of seasonality and so forth beyond single pre-cooked GIS layers of "ship traffic".

A large number of GIS layers (1x1 km grid data) with such details are currently being calculated from original AIS tracks by the HELCOM Secretariat.

The aim of the HELCOM AIS data explorer, developed as part of the HASPS, is to make this information more easily accessible for maritime spatial planners and other users by providing a pilot version of a web-based tool for finding and identifying patterns in the complex HELCOM AIS ship movement data.

Patterns identified on the web-tool can be further analysed on the desktop as the tool aims to enable download of GIS data in the form of the Baltic-wide 1x1 km grids.

The online user interface will be a customized geospatial (grid) data viewer and selection tool with simple analytical capabilities such as displaying different maps side-by-side for easy comparison of differences or temporal changes (cf. Fig.1).

The tool will be made available online by HELCOM in June 2016. The HELCOM Secretariat (hermanni.backer@helcom.fi) appreciates any comments and ideas around the tool already at this early stage (as well as later on).
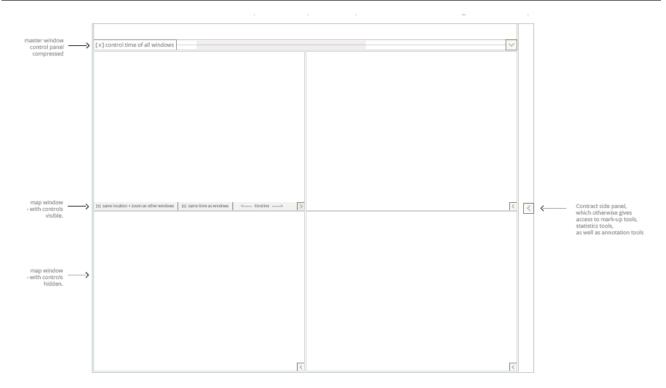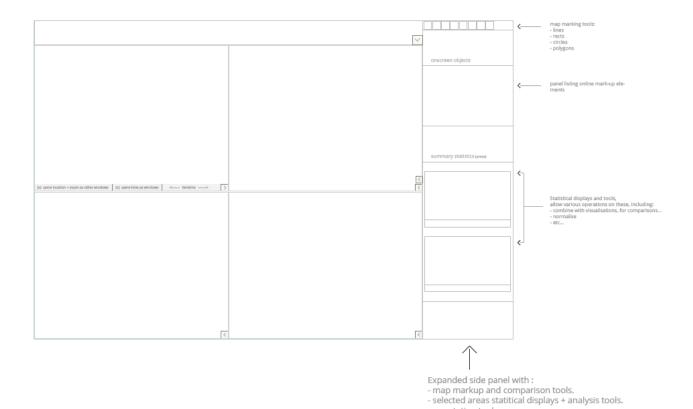
Figure 1. The online user interface of AIS explorer.

Figure 2. Extended view of online user interface of AIS explorer