



Document title	Finnish programme for inventory of the marine environment
Code	4-1
Category	INF
Agenda Item	4 - Ecosystem-based approach in MSP
Submission date	02.05.2017
Submitted by	Finland
Reference	

Background

MSP WG 13-2016 took note of the actions taken on MPAs and MSP as intersessional communication between Co-chair of HELCOM State&Conservation and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and welcomed the initiative to strengthen cooperation between these groups to facilitate implementation of ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning. The group agreed to include this activity into the working plan.

The document contains an example of establishing of the information platform for communication processes between environmental institutions and spatial planners to enhance the use of the available data on marine environment for the MSP purposes.

The action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and use it to facilitate cooperation n MPAs in MSP.

Finnish national inventory programme for the marine environment.

The Finnish Inventory Programme for the Underwater Marine Environment (VELMU) has substantially improved the knowledge of the Finnish marine environment since 2004, when the programme started. Information from more than 100 000 inventory points has been gathered. The analysed data is made available free of charge through a web based map service <http://paikkatieto.ymparisto.fi/velmu/>. A large number of relevant actors have been involved and results have been used in conservation and sustainable use of marine environment.

Since the amount of the sea areas users is constantly growing, a deficit of knowledge on the underwater marine environment hinders allocation of various uses in an environmentally sustainable manner. In the Finnish Inventory Programme for Underwater Marine Environment VELMU (2004-2016), both abiotic (geological, physical and chemical) and biotic characteristics of the marine environment have been mapped and modelled. Inventories have been conducted particularly to map the distribution of benthic habitats, vascular plants, macroalgae, invertebrates and fish species living in these habitats. **The aim** of the inventories is to identify hot-spots of functional and species diversity and sites where species requiring a particular protection occur.

VELMU is a result of a broad-scale cooperation between many institutes under eight ministries. The actual work has been done by partners from various institutions dealing with different marine issues. VELMU also incorporates inputs from end users as well as data providers. The information produced by VELMU is highly demanded by, e.g., government and local authorities, experts, regional government authorities, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and private citizens.

The data integrated into the VELMU has been used nationally for regional spatial plans as well as for reporting on the state of Finland's marine environment to the Regional Sea Convention HELCOM and the EU (Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Habitats Directive reporting)

In addition the programme served also as a tool to assist in building of the infrastructure for the inventory, research and monitoring of marine biodiversity in Finland's complex coastal waters and improving knowledge and expertise in marine biodiversity.

A new phase of VELMU development started with launching of VELMU 2 in the beginning of this year. One of the main aims of VELMU 2 is to disseminate VELMU map service to end-users and promote the use of the map service as well as to develop a more end user friendly interface for it. This phase will also include inventories, but they will be mainly focused on areas with e.g. deficit of data or endangered species or habitats. To achieve the goals of VELMU 2, the VELMU coordination team together with the project group prepared a VELMU 2 Road Map 2017-2025 and invited MSP planners into the project team.

The national legislation on maritime spatial planning came into force in October 2016. According to it, three spatial plans will be drafted for Finnish marine area by eight coastal regional councils. The Ministry of the Environment and the coastal regional councils have started development of working processes as well as the form and content of the maritime spatial plans. To implement these tasks, a coordination group representing the ministry and the coastal regional councils has established. Among other issues this group will collect the information needed for planning.

The Finnish Environment Institute will develop a Finnish Maritime Portal during the next two years. The portal will provide access to all available information on the marine area serving the needs of various stakeholders such as authorities, research and educational organizations etc. Maritime spatial planning will be a significant theme on the portal. VELMU inventories will be a major source of information for spatial plans and the Maritime Portal will provide an access to VELMU inventories. Maritime spatial planning needs reliable spatial information among others about marine species, communities and habitats, which VELMU caters for.

For the development of the maritime planning process and maritime spatial plans a network of all concerned parties will be established. The network will mainly communicate via internet but also have meetings. The plans will be drafted jointly by regional councils on GIS based platform, which will be established as well. The Maritime Portal is tasked to support planning, possibly providing a platform for information source and as communication tool.