



PRESS RELEASE

Preparing for Ministerial summits in a Baltic regional meeting of HELCOM and VASAB

Firm steps towards coherent Maritime Spatial Planning by 2020

29 January 2013, Riga, Latvia – Authorities responsible for the marine environment protection and spatial planning of the Baltic coastal countries as well as the European Commission are meeting today to discuss a number of issues related to advancing coherent Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea. Particular focus will be on preparations for the Ministerial Meetings of the [Helsinki Commission \(HELCOM\)](#) and [Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea \(VASAB\)](#) in October 2013 and in autumn 2014, respectively.

The members of the jointly chaired [HELCOM-VASAB group on Maritime Spatial Planning](#) will devise a roadmap for achieving coherent and ecosystem-based maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic by 2020. The roadmap will draw from the review of the latest progress in national legislation for MSP and the development of spatial plans for the sea areas, and identified areas where further work is needed.

“Many of the countries are in the process of developing new plans for either the territorial waters or the Exclusive Economic Zone, or both. To ensure coherent planning across the borders, the procedures for transboundary consultation need to be in place, regarding also early stage of the planning, and this is one of our aims”, says **Andrzej Cieślak** from the Maritime Office in Gdynia, Poland, and the Co-Chair of the HELCOM-VASAB Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning.

Transboundary consultation is included in the [Broad-scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles](#) adopted within HELCOM and VASAB as a common base for MSP in the region.

Another issue to be worked out by the group is planning guidelines, for application of the ecosystem approach in order to have the Baltic Sea in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so that it can provide the services humans want and need. The entire regional marine ecosystem, as well as sub-regional systems and all human activities within it, should be considered in this context.

“There is no blueprint available yet on ecosystem based Maritime Spatial Planning and the important linkages need to be created between MSP and policy goals such as in the [HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan](#), to achieve a good environmental status of the marine waters. HELCOM and VASAB have achieved groundbreaking work in widening the horizon beyond purely sectorial thinking towards an integrated spatial approach within the Baltic marine area”, says the Co-chair of the Joint MSP Group, **Anita Mäkinen**, Finnish Transport Safety Agency.

The group is also expected to give their input to the proposed new HELCOM Recommendation on measures to safeguard important habitats and migratory routes of seabirds from negative effects of offshore wind parks in the Baltic Sea. Once finalized, the Recommendation will be forwarded for adoption by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting later this year, for implementation on national level. The measures would be applied when planning and installing new wind energy facilities.

The group, overseeing the implementation of MSP actions under the [EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#), will review the progress of the flagship project [PartiSEApate](#) (Multi-level Governance in Maritime Spatial Planning throughout the Baltic Sea Region), as well as consider initiating a new project on MSP in the Gulf of Finland. Other topic to be dealt with is the availability of relevant spatial data which is one of the current obstacles of proper maritime spatial planning.

* * *

Note to Editors:

[The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission](#), usually referred to as HELCOM, is an intergovernmental organisation of all the nine Baltic Sea countries and the EU which works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution. HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area", known as the Helsinki Convention.

[Vision and Strategies around the Baltic \(VASAB\)](#) is an intergovernmental forum for co-operation of eleven ministers responsible for spatial planning and development. The countries involved are Belarus, Norway and the nine Baltic Sea countries. VASAB was established in 1992 and a permanent secretariat was formed in 1994. VASAB is steered by a Committee on Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) composed of representatives of respective ministries and regional authorities.

* * *

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Monika Stankiewicz

Executive Secretary

HELCOM

Tel: +358 (0)40 840 2471

Fax: +358 (0)207 412 645

Skype: helcom17

E-mail: monika.stankiewicz@helcom.fi

Mr. Talis Linkaits

Head of Secretariat

VASAB

Tel: +371 67350630

Fax: +371 67350626

Email: talis.linkaits@vasab.org