

Baltic Sea Region
MSP Data Expert Sub-Group
16th meeting

DECISIONS

Online, 14-15 October 2021

General:

1. With support from [Capacity4MSP](#) project platform HELCOM Secretariat organised a BASEMAPS helpdesk that took place back-to-back with the 16th MSP Data Expert Sub-group (hereafter - Data group) meeting. Helpdesk provided support and assistance to BSR countries with adding input and output data on [BASEMAPS](#) (Baltic WEB Map Service). Lithuania participated in the session. In future these sessions could be done in a more informal way, when HELCOM Secretariat is addressed directly upon need.
2. Data Group members introduced with the latest developments concerning the data issues (“tour de table”):
 - a. **Denmark:** The Danish MSP has been in a six month consultation period since the 31st of March until the 30th of September. Now the received consultation responses as well as the responses received through the Espoo consultation are being processed. It is planned to have the revised and final plan approved in December/January; however, it depends on new suggestions for protected marine strategy areas.
 - b. **Estonia:** Estonian MSP is in the very final steps, during the summer discussions with ministries took place. After the final interministerial round of plan approval (until the end of October) one more public hearing of the final solution is planned before sending the plan to the government. It is planned that the MSP will be adopted by government in January 2022. Regarding MSP data a new planning portal will be developed after the adoption as the current portal is hosted by the consultant developing the plan, so the links will be changed and plan will be integrated in the official data infrastructure. Currently a portal for all plans approved in Estonia is being developed, it is being discussed to merge MSP within it or develop a separate portal for MSP.
 - c. **Finland:** [Finnish Maritime Spatial Plan](#) was approved in December 2020 and now it is in force. Next steps are being planned to start the evaluation and monitoring process as well as discussing the potential themes and contents for the 2nd planning cycle. Wrap up seminar for parties involved in the 1st planning cycle will be organised. Regarding data, currently, interfaces to share and download data are being tested.
 - d. **Germany:** Revised maritime spatial plan for EEZ has been adopted and published on the German web map service [GeoSeaPortal](#). Both Baltic and North Sea plans are available there. Under the Table of Contents different Web Map Services can be found, including the ‘Maritime Spatial Plan EEZ 2021’ that has various layers. At this stage, it is not possible to download the Web Feature Service directly, but it is possible through the following [link](#).
 - e. **Lithuania:** A new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania (MSP is a part of it) was approved at the end of September, the data portal is available [here](#). MSP data can be downloaded from the portal.
 - f. **Latvia:** Not a new development, but a reminder that the MSP of Latvia overview map is available [here](#). The Latvian MSP in WMS has 3 separate services in Latvian Geoportal:

6. HELCOM Ministerial Meeting will take place on 20 October 2021, HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the new Regional MSP Roadmap have to be adopted during this Meeting. Regional MSP Roadmap has already been adopted by the 85th Meeting of VASAB CSPD/BSR.
7. HELCOM has started to work on the 3rd Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea Environment (HOLAS III).
8. Pan Baltic Scope essential fisheries habitat (EFH) maps are published on the [HELCOM MADS](#). HELCOM FISH group noted that there is ongoing work on HELCOM BLUES project that made a request to ICES to produce fishing effort and intensity maps and could be linked with the work with HOLAS III. Minor amendments were made to the EFH maps in February 2021.
9. “[eMSP NBSR](#)” (Emerging ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning topics in North and Baltic Sea Regions) project was approved for funding from EASME, DG Mare. The project will include a work package on data. Project is led by Netherlands Enterprise Agency, in total there are 17 project partners. Now the project is in the 6 month inception phase (Work Package 2), in which partners set up the frame of the project. The implementation phase will last 24 months until 2024. Project has 5 work packages out of those, the WP3 will include 5 learning strands within the Community of Practice model:
 - a. Ocean governance;
 - b. Ecosystem-based approach;
 - c. Sustainable blue economy;
 - d. Monitoring and evaluation;
 - e. Data sharing, information and communication technology serving MSP.

HELCOM co-leads the strand on Ecosystem-based approach learning strand together with SWaM and is involved in data sharing strand, which is led by French Naval Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service. Main outcome of the data strand is to make plans available on data portals. HELCOM will provide an overview info on MSP data available in BSR. WP4 works on science and policy interface. WP5 is dedicated to the communication and is led by VASAB. Some resources to fine tune the BASEMAPS and address some short-term needs might be allocated within this project, but it has to be agreed during the inception phase.

10. Many BSR countries are part of the “eMSP NBSR” project – Germany (BSH), Sweden (SWaM), Finland (SYKE as partner, Ministry of Environment in the Advisory group) and Poland (Gdynia Maritime University). Estonia, Latvia and Russia are interested to follow the project developments and contribute when possible.
11. The EU MSP Technical expert group on Data has prepared an official EU publication [Recommendations document](#) on how to publish MSP output data. BASEMAPS model is compliant with these recommendations, same classification as in the BSR is accepted as one of the compliant approaches. Next meeting will take place on 23 November and the focus will be on specific topics under subgroups – e.g. on MSP and MSFD data interconnections and similarities and on metadata of MSP plans.
12. Sampsa Koponen and Jenni Attila from the Baltic AIMS project presented the concept and activities of the Baltic AIMS project. The project is funded by the European Space Agency, it is coordinated by SYKE and will last until 2023. The main aim of the project is to demonstrate integrated data approach for essential processes of land and coastal water areas, as well as demonstrate the benefits of utilising satellite observations for coastal management. So far certain gaps have been identified: lack of information on seasonality (especially in spring and winter) of the events in the sea and separating human impacts and natural processes. Although a lot of data is available on national level and compiled on HELCOM MADS, the data on water quality and human impacts on coastal waters are still needed. In project there are demonstration areas in which project analyses existing satellite data, but the data gathered could be expanded to the whole Baltic Sea. For MSP two showcases could be especially useful: Earth Observation based information to be used in user legacy systems for spatial planning and monitoring the impacts of social activities. It is planned to develop a BALTIC AIMS interface

where various data will be added including also seasonal data. The interface demo phase will be launched in 2022, including public viewer as well as with possibility to download data. Demonstration material will be available from March to October 2022. Data group is invited to provide feedback during upcoming year.

13. Deborah introduced the overview on the data available on BASEMAPS and its compatibility with INSPIRE. The process included 3 steps: at first assessment to link BASEMAPS categories to INSPIRE themes was carried out to identify layers related to marine/coastal data, followed by an example of one country where it was checked whether datasets with relevant MSP information could be assessed and whether those layers could be added to the BASEMAPS within existing structure. In the concrete example analysed only 2 out of 56 datasets could actually be added on BASEMAPS as there were challenges as empty data sets, inaccessible services and frequent updates of the datasets and metadata links. In the third step a guidance for MSP data in INSPIRE was provided and it was learned that what should be included in each theme was not always straight-forward and many themes were overlapping. Multiple BASEMAPS Themes include the same INSPIRE themes as the INSPIRE structure was foreseen primarily for land.
14. Keeping in mind the decisions from the previous meeting as well as the data related objectives of the new Regional MSP Roadmap, the Data group continued discussions on the MSP input data within the BASEMAPS. Following topics were raised during the discussion:
 - a. Input data might be useful for the monitoring and evaluation of the MSP process which will be important as part of the national planning cycles and implementation of the new Regional MSP Roadmap.
 - b. There are examples when the sub-categories are not providing a comprehensive overview (e.g. IMO routes) or the data layers are not added or added in an inappropriate place because they are covering more or different information as the sub-category title. However, in some cases complete removal of sub-categories might confuse the users of BASEMAPS as the themes are broad and contain many data sets (e.g., maritime transport). Therefore, it would be useful to test a BASEMAPS 'copy' without the sub-categories. Instead of categories description to the datasets could be added. A further option would be to explore an option where the main category is countries.
 - c. It is important that a specific name of the service can be added by the data provider, but still, it would be useful to harmonize the vocabulary across countries, so it is convenient to use. A possible solution could be to implement a drop-down list for sub-categories based on the Sea Use Categories in the Guideline. For easier navigation, an option to add key words or hashtags to the layers could be considered that would allow to search among the various datasets easier.
 - d. The pan-Baltic or Europe-wide layers could be added for the whole Baltic Sea jointly so that the same data set does not have to be added by each country.
 - e. During the restructuring the BASEMAPS input data section, it would be useful to assess the categories of available HELCOM data and update HELCOM data links (permanent URLs).
 - f. The main aim of the further development of the input data section should be to simplify the use of BASEMAPS both for the users as well as for to data providers to upload the data.
 - g. For further development of BASEMAPS it is crucial to understand who the users of BASEMAPS are and what are their needs. Recently a similar survey has been carried out for HELCOM MADS which could serve as a template for BASEMAPS survey. Potential future users should also be kept in mind.
15. Bettina presented German experience with uploading MSP output data to BASEMAPS. There are specific spatial designations included in the new plan that do not fit in the existing BASEMAPS structure – temporary reservation areas, conditional reservation areas, connecting

gates and bird migration corridors. Temporary priority or reservation areas could expire or could be permanent, conditional priority or reservation areas might change. As the current BASEMAPS structure does not provide these categories, a question is raised whether it could be possible to add two new attributes with code lists 'temporary' and 'conditional' to BASEMAPS where detailed description could be included in the UseDesc. A further proposal would be to add another attribute 'Further spatial designations' for designations that do not fit in the existing structure. Another aspect proposed for future consideration is to once more revisit the depiction of linear structures within the BASEMAPS. To address the challenge the Data group discussed various approaches:

- a. A proposal was made to utilize the Restricted Sea Use designation for the temporary and conditional sea uses, however it would have the limitation of not providing an immediate overview of the MSP in certain country and users how to read the descriptions.
 - b. There was a similar challenge with Swedish MSP that certain sea uses did not fit into the provided structure, and it was solved providing detailed information in the Use Description.
 - c. Currently the Use description has a limitation of 1000 characters, but there are no restrictions to increase the number of characters.
 - d. It has to be kept in mind that in cases where multiple different plans are compiled it will always include harmonization and it means losing some level of detail.
 - e. Adding new attributes would require changing the current data model and it would also mean that the countries who have already uploaded data, would have empty attributes. Furthermore, the existing data model is extended to EU level, so expansion of the existing data model is implying major changes. However, the European model can intake different data models and it can be considered for the next planning cycle.
 - f. For long-term development, adding the time component (temporality) could be considered.
 - g. Although from the user's perspective it would seem appropriate to change the existing structure and to include a new attribute in BASEMAPS, knowing the broader consequences it will be investigated on how to include the German plan in the existing BASEMAPS structure utilizing the Use description.
16. Joni presented the recent development regarding output data on BASEMAPS – a good coverage of plans is currently published; some countries have to update to the newest version of plans. At this stage, the best way to deliver data is by logging in the Admin Panel of BASEMAPS and uploading shapefiles of MSP. As WFS are implemented in very different way in BSR countries that hinders from developing a joint tool to upload WFS data. HELCOM Secretariat is willing to assist countries in uploading the data if there is such a need.
17. An emerging issue with BASEMAPS is the need to update existing output data. German MSP is the the next one to be updated, followed by Estonian MSP, when MSP process will be finalized in Estonia. If new data is added with the same planID, the old Sea Uses are being backed up and removed from BASEMAPS. If the Sea Uses with another planID are added, the plan will be uploaded on top of the existing. Previously, Data group has agreed that only the current plan would be available in BASEMAPS. At the same time, there is a need for overlapping plans in case there are multiple plans in force (e.g., in Poland, Estonia). Therefore, a new functionality will be introduced that allows to remove existing data from BASEMAPS in Admin Panel and the data provider can decide to keep or remove the old MSP area and Sea Use data. This functionality should be based on the PlanID and a list of all planIDs for the relevant country would be given, country could choose to keep or remove the plan. Whenever it is possible, the outdated data should be removed, to keep the BASEMAPS clean. As regards to overlapping plans and scales – further discussions for the best approach are required in the upcoming meetings.

18. Data group discussed the Discussion paper on long-term needs for BASEMAPS development. Aim of the paper is to share a common understanding on data exchange in the region in the future.
19. There is a proposal that HELCOM could be mandated to upload national MSP data to EMODNet as the solution within EMODnet is based on BASEMAPS. However, this would still have to be discussed internally and further discussed in the future meetings.

Outcomes:

20. It is agreed that further on there will be no dedicated helpdesk sessions for data upload on BASEMAPS, but the countries can request support in uploading data to BASEMAPS upon need directly from HELCOM Secretariat, by emailing to data@helcom.fi.
21. It is agreed that an end-user survey of BASEMAPS will be developed based on the template used for HELCOM MADS and launched this year (by end of November). This will allow to understand the users of BASEMAPS and needs for future development and analyse the data until the next Data group meeting. Data group members are supporting the distribution of survey to existing and potential users of BASEMAPS in order to have a broader range of answers.
22. It is agreed that the current output data model remains, but the national data can be uploaded and displayed in a way that allows to depict national specifics. It is agreed that the Use description in the output data section in BASEMAPS will be increased 5000 characters.
23. After all countries have uploaded their MSPs to BASEMAPS, based on the experience other output data structures can be considered for the next planning cycle. At this stage, a list of issues of needs will be developed for long-term development of output data section and added to the Discussion paper on long-term needs for BASEMAPS development.
24. It is agreed that a new functionality to remove the old plan and associated sea use data based on planID will be added to the BASEMAPS. It will provide data providers an opportunity to decide which plans should be kept. As it is urgent, Andžej will remove the outdated plan of Germany manually from the database so that the new plan shapefile can be uploaded. If any other country needs output data removal until the functionality is introduced, they can reach out to HELCOM Secretariat.
25. It is agreed that possibility to add WMS of MSP output data in BASEMAPS application would be beneficial to show national specific visualizations and added to the Discussion paper on short term needs for BASEMAPS development.
26. It is agreed that a back-up version of BASEMAPS database with existing layer structure will be developed that would allow to test different input data structures of BASEMAPS with an option to return to the previous one.
27. Regarding the input data structure and functionalities on BASEMAPS it is agreed to introduce and test following changes:
 - a. Removing all the current sub-categories and move existing data layers to country categories.
 - b. Countries are maintained under the main categories and all layers under Category are sub-divided in countries.
 - c. To have flexibility to have subcategories under country if needed based on the data structure; if there are only few layers there is no need subcategories under country. The decision to develop subcategories under the country is made by the data provider.
 - d. To have a possibility for the data provider to name subcategory with description on what the layer contains (Add description field for a subgroup/ layer in admin panel).

- e. To implement a drop-down list for names of sub-categories and free text field if none of the proposed titles fit.
28. Data group approved the changes introduced in the Discussion paper on long-term needs after previous meeting with minor adjustments. Short and long term needs mentioned during this meeting will be added to the document by Liene.
29. Given the decided tasks regarding input and output data as well as possible contribution to the implementation of the new Regional MSP Roadmap, Data group would suggest to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to prolong the mandate of the Data group until the end of 2023.

Tasks and next steps:

- 30. New functionality to remove outdated output data added to BASEMAPS (Andžej)
- 31. A discussion paper is amended based on these decisions and distributed to the group (Liene)
- 32. Survey to profile users of BASEMAPS will be launched during November (HELCOM)
- 33. Work on restructuring input data section on BASEMAPS will be started and carried out until the next Data group meeting (HELCOM)

Future meetings:

- 34. Upcoming spring meeting of the Data group should take place on 3-4 March 2022, preferably in Warsaw, or online.
- 35. The next HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG meeting will take place on 16-17 November.
- 36. Data group members are invited to follow the VASAB LTP update. Next co-creation workshops will take place on 20 October (for Russian stakeholders) and on 26 November.
- 37. VASAB LTP update and Capacity4MSP project platform workshop on MSP visioning will take place on 2nd December 2021 online.
- 38. Round Table «Strategic planning system for the development of maritime activities in the Russian Federation and maritime spatial planning» at XIX Annual Strategic Planning Leaders Forum of The Regions and Cities of Russia will take place on 26 October in St. Petersburg and online.
- 39. Capacity4MSP Final conference of Russian partners will be organised on 9-10 December.

