

The 2nd Meeting of Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning on Maritime Spatial Planning

9-10 March 2023, Helsinki Finland

(2-2023 SG EUSBSR PA SP on MSP)

Minutes

The Steering Group (SG) was attended by representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. HELCOM observers were represented by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and participated online to the Session. The Session was also attended by invited guests from MSP4BIO project, ReMAP project, the EU MSP Platform and the EUSBSR Baltic Sea Strategy Point. Coordinators of Policy Area Spatial Planning Liene Gaujeniete (VASAB Secretariat) and Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky (HELCOM Secretariat) acted as secretaries of the SG.

1. News from EUSBSR and PA SP

- 1.1. The SG took note of the information on the activities related to the Policy Area (PA) Spatial Planning of the EUSBSR and organizational matters (document 5-1 Rev.1 and presentation 4). The SG also took note of the activities implemented with the support of PASPS project.
- 1.2. The SG considered the reasoning for structuring the SG Agenda and minutes. The SG agreed on the proposal being based on PA workplan and Rules of Procedure. Starting from this SG meeting, following topics from the HELCOM-VASAB MSP agenda will be covered in SG minutes:
 - progress towards the implementation of the Regional MSP Roadmap and other MSP related commitments
 - follow up the implementation of PASPS project
 - operationalization of regional MSP follow-up mechanism
 - progress of the BSR MSP Data ESG
 - follow up of the Planners` Forum and identification of project ideas
 - cooperation with relevant stakeholders including other PAs of EUSBSR
 - news from EUSBSR and PA SP
 - Recent developments of projects that contribute to the implementation of EUSBSR Action Plan, MSP Roadmap and HELCOM-VASAB Work Plan 2022-2024, VASAB Vision 2040
- 1.3. The SG thanked coordinators of PA SP for the organizational work done to operationalize the work of the SG.

Workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning for strengthening spatial conservation measures and supporting sustainable blue economy (13-15 June 2023)

- 1.4. The SG took note of the concept of the Workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning strengthening spatial conservation measures and supporting sustainable blue economy, under the frame of [eMSP project](#) with support from PA Spatial Planning and involvement from [MSP4BIO project](#) to be held on 13-15 June 2023 in Helsinki, Finland (presentation 8).

- 1.5. The SG highlighted the view of WWF that certain industrial sectors and practices hinder the implementation of a sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea region and that it would be good to include this in the discussions during the MSP EBA-SBE workshop to be held in Helsinki in June 2023 as focusing only on sectors that support a SBE will not ensure successful achievement.
- 1.6. The SG invited the organizers to share the invitation to the workshop with all interested expert communities and groups. The SG took note of the information from the HELCOM Secretariat that the invitations will be submitted to the relevant HELCOM contacts as indicated in the PA Work Plan (2.1.1.).

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

- 1.7. The SG took note of the information on the decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as presented by Finland, (presentation 9). The Conference was held in Montreal, Canada, on 7-19 December 2022 and the decisions can be found [online](#).
- 1.8. The SG was of the view that agreed targets are very ambitious noting that some issues were not included in the final decision due to mainly financial reasons. The SG pointed out that setting of separate 30% target for marine, coastal and inland waters is highly beneficial for nature conservation. The SG also discussed how the targets are to be achieved and how they can be aligned with respective HELCOM work strands.

2. Cooperation with relevant stakeholders including other PAs of EUSBSR

- 2.1. The SG took note of the information on the 4th Macro Regional-Strategies (MRS) Week, to be held on 24-28 April 2023 in Brussels, Belgium, in hybrid format and of an attempt to arrange a stakeholder session on renewable energy as a part of the Week. The SG members are invited to attend the MRS week sessions on 26 and 27 April onsite.
- 2.2. The SG further took note that a concept of the online stakeholder session was elaborated by PA coordinators and that contact points from other MRSs were approached to join the workshop application. Unfortunately, the application was not finalized due to lack of interest from other MRSs.
- 2.3. The SG noted that Baltic Sea Strategy Point is willing to assist in finding respective contacts in other MRSs.
- 2.4. The SG was of the view that the topic is of high relevance and took note that in the frame of the MRS Week the Commission is planning to arrange a physical meeting between MRSs to discuss issues of high political significance. The SG noted that since renewable energy is of high political importance, the EC would be interested to initiate such thematic meeting and invite PA SP to take active part in the discussion. The SG supported establishing of a dialog with other MRSs on renewable energy and encouraged PA coordinators to undertake necessary steps.
- 2.5. The SG supported arranging of a workshop on wind energy in the frame of EUSBSR Annual Forum in Riga, Latvia, on 4-5 October 2023 and recommended PA coordinators to lead the organization of such a workshop. The SG encouraged relevant projects to support and take active part in the workshop.

3. Progress towards the implementation of the Regional MSP Roadmap and other MSP related commitments

- 3.1. The Steering Group (SG) recalled the discussion held during IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2022 on this topic. The SG further recalled that the Regional MSP Roadmap is a one of the

regional strategic policy agreements and the interim assessment of progress is an important process to be carefully planned.

- 3.2. The SG further discussed the planning of the interim assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation. The SG welcomed the offer from the HELCOM Secretariat to initiate this process and invited the countries to contact the HELCOM Secretariat (lotta.ruokanen@helcom.fi, florent.nicolas@helcom.fi) for an initial brainstorming and planning to be presented at the next informal consultation session of the WG.
- 3.3. The SG took note of the proposal for the scope of the EBA guideline revision as presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (presentation 2). The Steering Group recalled that the Guideline was adopted in 2016 and that policies related to the application of ecosystem-based approach in MSP have been significantly renewed (e.g., Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), Regional MSP Roadmap, EU Biodiversity Strategy, European Green Deal, VASAB Vision 2040 etc.), as well as the knowledge on the state of the Baltic Sea and its ecosystems.
- 3.4. The SG further provided general guidance for the revision processes pointing out that the revised Guideline should be:
 - More concrete.
 - Relevant to the new policy landscape and easy for practical use.
 - Reflect the VASAB Vision 2040 in the policy landscape.
 - Avoid references to short-term processes.
 - Include ecosystem accounting as a vital component of the ecosystem-based approach which should be properly addressed in the Guideline.
 - Considering with caution the carrying capacity of ecosystems, primarily via linkage of MSP and MSFD.
 - Strengthening nature restoration and respective law should be addressed in the policy landscape.
- 3.5. The SG exchanged views on one of the proposed key elements, accounting for nature value and ecosystem carrying capacity, and took note that HELCOM State & Conservation Working Group has finalized the draft of the regional common understanding of the OCEM criteria, presented together with guidance from CBD, IUCN and the EU Commission as context and reference, as well as a brief overview of how OECMs can support the coherence of marine protected area (MPA) network based on information prepared under CBD, IUCN and HELCOM and the decision tree to support identification of potential OECM, this is submitted for recommendation and adoption at IC HELCOM 1-2023. The SG recommended to take into account the HOLAS 3 results and the work of HELCOM Working Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR) in the Guideline's revision.
- 3.6. The SG further underscored that many current regional projects (e.g., SELINA, Baltic Sea2Land, etc.) can substantially contribute to the Guideline's revision, and that outcome of accomplished projects (i.e. Pan Baltic Scope) should also be considered.
- 3.7. The SG took note that there is no intention to change any relevant content as such but to strengthen the Guideline and to account for the developments in the policy landscape and level of knowledge, for example on the ecology of the Baltic Sea.

4. Operationalization of regional MSP follow-up mechanism

- 4.1. The SG took note of latest information on the follow-up of the national MSP developments and that Latvia was the only country providing input. The SG invited the countries to further contribute to the follow-up mechanism for the next informal consultation session of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.
- 4.2. The SG invited the countries and the EU to further provide updates to the follow-up mechanism, with a special view on recent and ongoing EU strategies and proposals related to MSP and their relationship to each other.
- 4.3. The SG took note of the information from Kristina Veidemane representing the EU MSP Platform on a new report from the European Commission on assessing the relevance and effect of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive in the context of the European Green Deal (published in June 2022).

5. Progress of the BSR MSP Data ESG

- 5.1. The SG took note of the information that the second informal consultation session of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group (IC BSR MSP Data ESG 2-2023) hosted by Finland, was held in Helsinki on 8 March 2023 with some participants attending online.
- 5.2. The SG took note of the key outcomes of IC BSR MSP Data ESG 2-2023 communicated by the Chair of the BSR MSP Data ESG, Zając Natalia, Poland.
- 5.3. The SG recalled that data harmonization concerns only output MSP data which is compiled in Basemaps and visualized in a harmonized way. This step of data harmonization needs a verification of spatial data displayed in Basemaps, for example to identify overlaps and gaps between the areas reported by the Contracting Parties.
- 5.4. The SG recognized the importance of Basemaps for the MSP data availability as well as the transparency of regional MSP work in general and encouraged national MSP data providers as well as the contacts of the BSR MSP Data ESG to fulfil required testing and data validating procedures in due time.

6. Follow up of the Planners' Forum and identification of project ideas

- 6.1. The SG took note of the information on the latest news from the Planners' Forum. The last session of the Planners' Forum was hosted by Finland and held in Helsinki on 8 March 2023. The SG took note that the European Green Deal will be a topic to be discussed during the next Planners' Forum to be held in fall 2023.
- 6.2. The SG took note of the information that the first Planners' Forum which took place on 4 November 2022 invited the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to consider the topic of OECMs as part of the Group's agenda.
- 6.3. The SG considered the proposed structure for the identification of project needs.
- 6.4. The SG welcomed the proposed structure and recalled that several project ideas were already proposed at the latest Planners' Forum.

7. Recent developments of projects that contribute to the implementation of EUSBSR Action Plan, MSP Roadmap and HELCOM-VASAB Work Plan 2022-2024, VASAB Vision 2040

- 7.1. The SG took note of the information on the ReMAP project, presented by the HELCOM Secretariat. The kick-off meeting was held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, on 13-14 December 2022. The SG also took note how the project will support some data related tasks

in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG workplan and is highly linked to objective 1 from the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap (presentation 3).

- 7.2. The SG took note and welcomed the progress achieved by eMSP NBSR project, emphasizing high relevance of project outcomes for the implementation of PA Spatial Planning goals and regional policy commitments (presentation 5).
- 7.3. The SG recommended anticipated project deliverables for consideration at the next HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG informal consultation sessions or PA Spatial Planning SG meetings.
- 7.4. The SG encouraged its members to participate in respective eMSP project events and recognized the growing popularity of the community of practice concept applied in the eMSP project.
- 7.5. The SG took note of the presentation on the recently started Baltic Sea2Land project funded by Interreg Baltic Sea 2021-2027 programme presented by Latvia, as project lead partner (presentation 6).
- 7.6. The SG recommended to keep the discussion on land-sea interaction alive and encouraged the project to contribute to this discussion.
- 7.7. The SG discussed the type of data to be produced by the project highlighting that the data on coastal zone management is of high relevance for MSP. The SG further noted that the project is planning to feed respective data in Basemaps but the format of this cooperation requires further investigation. Non-spatial information which is planned to be produced by the project primarily involves statistical data or qualitative information on respective human activities.
- 7.8. The SG took note of the information on the latest development of MSP4BIO project, presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (presentation 7).
- 7.9. The SG took note that in some countries marine protected areas (MPAs) are designated by regional authorities thus they are designated and managed at governmental level which differs from the authorities responsible for MSP. This highlights the importance of continuous dialogue and cooperation between various governance levels.
- 7.10. The SG discussed the representativeness of various experts and authorities in the project's CoP and the interviews conducted by MSP4BIO, invited any interested members of the group to contact HELCOM Secretariat (kemal.pinarbasi@helcom.fi) for joining the CoP and welcomed offer by eMSP project to cooperate in finding more respondents for the next interviews within the project's CoP.
- 7.11. The SG took note that MSP4BIO is maintaining close cooperation with MarinePlan project and will coordinate with other related projects within the MSP4BIO General Assembly on 20-21 March 2023 ensuring synergies of the project work.
- 7.12. The SG took note of the preliminary information from the HELCOM Secretariat on the newly funded HORIZON Europe project PROTECT BALTIC. The SG took note of the linkages between this new project and MSP and invited the Secretariat to further share information during one of the next informal consultation sessions of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.
- 7.13. The SG took note that EC is planning to undertake a revision of project websites to make project outcomes better searchable and usable. Furthermore, the SG invited PA coordinators to keep doing important work on coordinating activities between various project to ensure smooth cooperation, mutual learning and synergy of project outputs.