



Extractions from HELCOM meeting outcomes relevant to ASCOBANS

[HELCOM 40-2019](#)

3.16 The Meeting considered the outcome of FISH 9-2019 and endorsed the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of assessment of the marine environment (EG Fishdata).

3.17 In this context, the Meeting requested that the Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea be finalized by FISH 10-2019.

[HOD 55-2018](#)

4.52 The Meeting took note of the technical amendments to HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise (document 4-23). The Meeting took note of the clarification that Sweden can lift their study reservation on the proposal, and that, while Germany cannot lift their study reservation, they are open to a revision of the Recommendation.

4.53 The Meeting agreed to initiate a process to revise the Recommendation whereby State and Conservation 10-2019 will provide initial revisions to the document, to be submitted to EG MAMA 13-2019 meeting for further revision and to State and Conservation 11-2019 for endorsement and submission to HOD 57-2019 for approval, aiming at adoption by HELCOM 41-2020.

[FISH 9-2019](#)

4.18 The Meeting took note of information provided by Sweden on a joint marine-fisheries workshop that was hosted by Sweden in Gothenburg on 23-24 January 2019, and that HELCOM matters such as the draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea had been referred to at the event.

4.19 The Meeting took note of a comment by Finland, that one of the lessons learned at the workshop was that there is a lot of synergy to be achieved between the EU Data Collection Framework and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive through practical cooperation, but that coordination is required on the national level in order to achieve this.

[Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea](#)

6.1 The Meeting recalled that, as established by FISH 7-2017, the 'Correspondence Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of MSFD implementation, for the Contracting Parties which are also EU members (CG Fishdata)' has worked, according to the Groups ToR (Annex 3, FISH 7-2017 Outcome), for developing a draft Roadmap on fisheries data for operationalizing the two indicators ('Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears' and 'Cumulative impact on

benthic biotopes') used for the purposes of MSFD implementation for the Contracting Parties which are also EU members.

6.2 The Meeting further recalled the progress made with regard to the development of the Roadmap lead by Denmark and Poland, and being considered by the CG FISHDATA 2-2018, FISH 8-2018, STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 and CG FISHDATA 3-2018 meetings.

6.4 Having made some editorial changes to the draft Terms of Reference, the Meeting approved the draft Terms of Reference and new status of the group as "Expert Group on fisheries data for operationalizing indicators used for the purposes of assessment of the marine environment" (EG Fishdata) as set out in Annex 3, subject to endorsement by HELCOM 40-2019. In this context, the Meeting agreed that the priority and purpose of EG FISHDATA is to operationalize the indicators, but that once this task is complete proposals may be made to FISH and HOD for amending the Terms of Reference and extending the mandate of the Group.

6.5 The Meeting noted information provided by ICES about working groups within ICES and the EU on various data issues, and agreed that the focus of EG FISHDATA should be on developing the Roadmap. ICES further commented that the purpose of the indicators was for management purposes, and that clearly stating the objectives with regard to bycatch and benthic biotopes is essential to guide both data collation and technical work to develop indicators.

6.6 The Meeting considered the possibilities of including all Contracting Parties into the work of EG Fishdata, and welcomed this as a possibility to broaden the utility of the Group beyond the sole purposes of EU MSFD implementation through common interests and interlinkages.

6.7 The Meeting encouraged those Contracting Parties that have not participated in the work of the group, to do so, and agreed that the national Heads of Delegation for the Fish Group should be the Fishdata contact points for those Contracting Parties that have not nominated official contact points for the Group. The Meeting specifically encouraged Estonia and Lithuania, who were present at FISH 9-2019, to join the work of EG Fishdata as well.

6.8 The Meeting recalled that CG Fishdata has been developing a Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea. CG FISHDATA 3-2018 agreed in November 2018 that while the draft Roadmap (set out in document 5 + attachments of CG FISHDATA 3-2018) contains much of the information needed, its current structure was not fit for purpose, and consequently a new structure for the Roadmap was developed (Annex 2 of the CG FISHDATA 3-2018 Outcome; document 6-1).

6.9 The Meeting noted that, as agreed by the CG FISHDATA 3-2018, the Chair developed a first draft Roadmap using the new structure, utilizing as much as possible text from the current draft, as well as the CG FISHDATA 3-2018 Outcome. The Meeting confirmed its support to the new structure of the draft Roadmap.

6.10 The Meeting took note of the Draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data set out in document 6-2, as presented by Denmark, and of comments on the Draft Roadmap, as presented by Germany and Poland in document 6-3.

6.11 The Meeting noted that there may be elements in the draft Roadmap that could potentially be of interest to note also by BALTFISH.

6.12 The Meeting agreed that the draft Roadmap set out in document 6-2 should be used as a starting point for its continued development, but that the comments in document 6-3 contains many useful elements to be taken on board.

6.13 The Meeting discussed extensively the various elements of the draft Roadmap, including some of the specific challenges with regard to the use of VMS and AIS data, as well as on the revision of the Control Regulation. The Meeting agreed that the Roadmap should not be drafted in a prescriptive way, as this may be problematic in relation to officially agreed national positions on e.g. EU legislation.

6.14 The Meeting also noted a comment by ICES on certain provisions in the proposal in document 6-3, related to the work of ICES, needing revision in order to ensure correctness. The Meeting welcomed the offer by ICES to engage in the further development of the Roadmap.

6.15 Finally, the Meeting discussed the way forward with a view to finalizing the Roadmap, and agreed that Denmark will develop a revised draft Roadmap for consideration by the next meeting of EG Fishdata, with the aim of finalizing and agreeing on the Roadmap at FISH 10-2019 and subsequent submission for approval to the next possible meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

Work on bycatch indicator development

9.1 The Meeting recalled that FISH 8-2018 noted information on the ongoing process under OSPAR Meeting of the Biodiversity Committee (BDC), which in February 2018 had agreed that proposals should be developed for a workshop to examine needs and possibilities for developing indicators for incidental by-catch of birds, seals, cetaceans, turtles and non-commercial fish, linked to related work by HELCOM and ICES as relevant. HOD 54-2018 noted the initiative for a possible joint HELCOM/OSPAR workshop on by-catch indicators.

9.2 As requested by FISH 8-2018 the Secretariat informed the Meeting on the initiative with the aim of having Fish and State and Conservation Groups contributing to the process.

9.3 The Meeting took note of the draft Terms of Reference for a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop for indicators for incidental bycatch (document 9-1), as introduced by the Secretariat.

9.4 The Meeting noted that the draft ToRs for the workshop have been drafted by the Secretariats of OSPAR and HELCOM, and have been submitted also to CG FISHDATA 3-2018, STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 and GEAR 19-2018, as well as OSPAR ICG-COBAM for comments, and are also to be considered by OSPAR BDC 2019 on 25-29 March 2019 before finalization by the HELCOM and OSPAR Secretariats based on the comments received from all relevant meetings.

9.5 The Meeting further noted that after submission of document 9-1, the HELCOM and OSPAR Secretariats have made further progress on the matter, including setting tentative dates for the workshop (9-11 September in Denmark).

9.6 The Meeting noted that a small group of interested countries have held online meetings with the HELCOM and OSPAR secretariats, in order to make progress on the preparations.

9.7 The Meeting did not provide any further comments to the draft ToR, but noted with appreciation that experts from ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS and ICES working groups have already been contacted to ensure their valuable expertise is included already in the early preparation of this Workshop.

STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018

2J.4 The Meeting took note of the Draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data (**document 2J-3, presentation 13**) in order to assess incidental by-catches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea as presented by Ms Katarzyna Kaminska, Poland

2J.5 The Meeting invited CG FISHDATA to consider incorporating a timeline and with associated task deadlines into the Roadmap. Meeting took note of the information that it is possible to provide further comments by 31 October 2018 and invited Poland to present progress regarding the work at State and Conservation 10-2019.

RECOMMENDATION 17/2 PROTECTION OF HARBOUR PORPOISE IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

3N.5 The Meeting considered the technical changes made to the draft proposal of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise, as drafted and agreed by SEAL 12-2018 (**document 3N-12**).

3N.6 The Meeting noted the comment by Denmark that Denmark cannot fully endorse point a. of the recommendation, which sets targets for bycatch without differentiating between the two populations of harbour porpoise in the HELCOM area. Denmark finds this distinction important, as the state of the two populations are different. Denmark agrees that bycatch levels should be as low as possible and should be close to zero for Baltic proper population. However, Denmark cannot aim at a bycatch rate close to 0 for the Belt Sea population as it is large and stable. This target could potentially require a closure of fisheries.

3N.7 The Meeting agreed to set up a drafting group consisting of Sweden, Germany, Poland, Finland, Denmark and CCB, to further draft technical amendments to the text. The amended text was presented to the Meeting, as contained in presentation 1.

3N.8 The Meeting took note that Denmark, Germany and Sweden, have study reservations on the draft update of the recommendation. The Meeting invited the three contracting parties to clarify their positions on the document by 9 November with the aim to submit the draft to HOD 55-2018 for endorsement of the technical amendments. The Meeting took note of the proposal by the drafting group on way forward, as presented by Poland (**presentation 1**).

3N.9 The Meeting in principle endorsed the technical amendments of the updated recommendation, taking into account the study reservations of Denmark, Germany and Sweden, (**document 3N-12 rev. 1**) to HOD 55 for approval and to HELCOM 40 for adoption.

3N.10 The Meeting considered that, as new knowledge on the existence of two sub-populations of the harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea and work on the new indicators concerning Baltic harbour porpoise, a revision of the Recommendation 17/2 is needed, and invited HOD 55-2018 to consider initiating a process to revise the Recommendation.

a. Follow-up of action 'avoiding by-catches of harbour porpoises, particularly following the recommendations of ASCOBANS and the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan'

3N.11 The Meeting took note of the information by Poland on the progress in work related to bycatch within HELCOM FISH and FISHDATA.

3N.12 The Meeting took note of the joined work of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS by-catch group, as presented by the Co-Chair.

3N.13 The Meeting took note of the ongoing work under the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of protected species as presented by Ms Sara Köningson, Sweden (**Presentation 2**) and noted that next Meeting of the Working group will take place in early March 2019, Portugal. The Meeting invited Sweden to keep the State and Conservation Working Group informed of the progress of the groups work on an annual basis.

3N.14 The Meeting took note of the annual compilation of registered marine mammal mortality (3N-14). The Meeting noted that new data from Germany, Estonia and Lithuania have been amended to the associated excel file (**document 3N-14 Att.1**) since the STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 Meeting. The Meeting noted that Germany will provide data for suspected by-catch in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for the year 2017 and Russia and Denmark will submit further complimenting data prior to HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA) 13-2019

3N.15 The Meeting took note of information by CCB that mutilated carcasses of seals and harbour porpoises have been reported in Poland, Germany and Lithuania.

3N.16 The Meeting took note of the information on draft Terms of Reference for a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop for indicators for incidental bycatch, as presented by the Secretariat (**document 3J-1**). The Meeting took note of the clarification that the workshop will be further discussed in the Joint session.

3N.17 The Meeting took note of the clarification by Sweden that the Contracting Party offered to host a joint workshop of RSC covering overlap under all indicator work, not specifically for bycatch.

b. Follow-up of action 'take action in close co-operation with ASCOBANS and ICES'

3N.18 The Meeting took note of the information regarding the 24th meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC), including the list of action points agreed at the 24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting as presented by the vice-Chair of ASCOBANS AC (**document 3N-9**).

3N.19 The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany that should a revision of the Recommendation 17/2 take place the action points under ASCOBANS might become relevant as part of the update.

3N.20 The Meeting noted the list of national contacts for updating the HELCOM/ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database and took note of the status of the database (**document 3N-13**). The Meeting noted that Poland and Finland have reported new data since the previous State and Conservation Meeting, and that Denmark will provide updated information before EG MAMA 13-2019 Meeting.

c. Follow-up of action 'establishment of marine protected areas for harbour porpoises within the framework of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs)

3N.21 The Meeting welcomed the information that the Swedish national species management plan for harbour porpoise is expected to be ready in spring 2019.

3N.22 The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden on the progress of the drafting of a management plan for the newly established harbor porpoise MPA, as presented by Ms Ida Carlén, CCB.

Indicators

3J.7 The Meeting reviewed the Draft Terms of Reference for a joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop for indicators for incidental bycatch (document 3J-1).

3J.8 The Meeting took note of proposed amendments by Denmark, Germany and Sweden to the document as contained in document 3J-1 rev. 1. The Meeting noted that further comments to the document will be provided by Denmark by 30 October 2018.

3J.9 The Meeting agreed that it would be beneficial to include references to relevant HELCOM (and OSPAR) commitments related to by-catch in the documentation for the workshop. The Meeting further noted that FISH and CG FISH DATA groups are missing from the indicated participants for the workshop, which should be amended to the draft ToR.

3J.10 The Meeting invited the respective Secretariats to communicate with the ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS by-catch working group regarding the workshop to benefit from the work done under ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS.

3J.11 The Meeting recalled that the proposed project HELCOM ACTION under the EU 2018 MSFD call contains a work package focusing defining high-risk areas for by-catch of marine mammals and birds and evaluating technical measures to reduce by-catch. The proposal is awaiting the funding decision.

Implementation of not yet accomplished HELCOM actions under the State and Conservation Group (Annex 5)

Action: Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing technical measures to minimise by-catch of harbour porpoises (BSAP)

Reflection: To be considered in cooperation with ASCOBANS (by-catch group), ICES by-catch group, HELCOM Fish, EG Marine mammals. The evaluation needs to be based on areas with higher populations of harbour porpoise (i.e. western Baltic Sea).

Proposal: As a first step request harbour porpoise team of EG marine mammals to identify which technical measures are available.

Action: Take decisive action to work towards a favourable conservation status of the harbor porpoise based on implementation of the CMS (Convention on Migratory Species) ASCOBANS (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas) Jastarnia Plan for the harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea, in particular by addressing the pressing problem of by-catch (MD 2013).

Reflection: To be considered in cooperation with Jastarnia/ASCOBANS. Currently the evaluation under the Habitats Directive is done jointly for the two populations of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea; consider making assessments separately for the two populations.

Red list assessments could help; FCS only compatible with not being a red-listed species. The HELCOM red-list assessment distinguishes between two populations.

Proposal: As a first step request EG Marine mammals to define “favourable conservation status” (e.g. threshold value), considering also IUCN red-list criteria.

SEAL 12-2018

2.8 The Meeting took note of the following information from the Contracting Parties: The German monitoring scheme for harbor porpoises is currently being revised from classical observation to digital observation. The first trial year has already ended and data is expected to be available soon.

4.11 The Meeting welcomed the information by Sweden that the harbor porpoise management plan is expected to be ready in the spring of 2019 and invited Sweden to update the information in document 4-1, and to present the work and the finalized plan at EG MAMA 13-2019.

6.12 The Meeting took note of the information on progress on the harbor porpoise distribution and abundance indicator as presented by Sacha Viquerat, Germany (presentation 9). The Meeting welcomed the suggestion, and justification for, splitting the indicator into two and asked that this information be forwarded to State and Conservation 9-2018.

6.13 The Meeting agreed to form a Harbour Porpoise Team subgroup consisting of Mr. Sacha Viquerat, Germany, Mr. Michael Dähne, Germany, Ms. Julia Carlström, Sweden, Signe Sveegaard, Denmark, Iwona Pawliczka, Poland, Olli Loisa, Finland, and Ida Carlén, Chair of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (in line with the correspondence between the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group and ASCOBANS).

6.14 The Meeting discussed the need to coordinate and cooperate the national harbor porpoise monitoring in order to achieve the sufficient data quality for the indicators to provide regional results. The Meeting agreed that the need to harmonize national work on a regional scale and that clear structures for this needs to be developed, with the EG MAMA harbor porpoise subgroup functioning as the coordinating platform and the indicator leads as contact persons on the topic.

6.15 The Meeting took note of the information on the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM workshop on development of incidental bycatch indicators (document 6-2) and asked that efforts should be made to find synergies, and possible cooperation, with the ACCOBAMS&ASCOBANS bycatch working group to avoid overlap.

Agenda Item 7 Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

7.1 The Meeting took note of the status of the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database (document 7-4). The Meeting took note that since the last meeting of SEAL EG, Poland has reported data on bycatch, incidental sightings and strandings from 2005 to 2018. Finland has reported on incidental sightings from 2000 to 2016. No other data has been received.

7.2 The Meeting took note that additional information for the database will be provided by Germany (incidental sightings) and Poland (monitoring program results) before EG MAMA 13-2019. Sweden has not reported for the last two years due to national database updates, but they hope to be able to report before EG MAMA 13-2019

7.3 The Meeting recalled that incidental sightings should be reported from the Baltic proper only.

7.4 The Meeting took note of the draft proposals for amendments of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise.

7.5 The Meeting agreed to further update the text of the Recommendation in a drafting group consisting of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. The Drafting Group agreed that the recommendation part should remain as it is in the actual valid version of the Rec. from 1996 (revised 2012), because the task given to the group was to update the Recommendation, not to revise it.

However, two technical changes should be made in the recommendation part and the changes that were made in the preamble should remain. The results of the drafting process was presented to the Meeting for approval (document 7-1 rev.1).

7.6 The Meeting agreed that changes to the recommendation part were outside of the mandate of the update process. This should be reported to State and Conservation 9-2018. The Meeting invited State and Conservation 9-2018 to consider the need for a revision of the recommendation and forward a respective proposal to the HODs, as some new developments such as the ASCOBANS Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and Kattegat and the MSFD for those Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States, and these should be recognized also in the recommendation part.

7.7 The Meeting approved the updated HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 as contained in document 7-1 rev.1, and agreed to submit it for consideration of STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018.

7.8 The Meeting took note of the list of Action Points agreed at the 24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting, including information on the work under the ACCOBAMS & ASCOBANS WG bycatch and their work on by-catch thresholds. The Meeting further took note of the work on guidelines for evaluating causes of strandings through necropsies, as well as that work is ongoing on updating the reporting formats in order to improve usability of the reported information (document 7-3).

7.9 The Meeting took note of further information on the mandate and working procedures of the Advisory Committee and invited Ms Ida Carlén, Chair of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group and Ms Penina Blankett, Chair of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee to keep SEAL EG informed on the progress of work under action point 9 on cost benefit analyses and action point 12 on by-catch work.

7.10 The Meeting took note of the report from the 14th meeting of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (document 7-2, presentation 3).

7.11 The Meeting took note of information by Germany that it has been confirmed by the German minister for the Environment that currently plans for a scientific follow up of the German PAL use are developed.

7.12 The Meeting welcomed the information that there is an initiative ongoing for a SAMBAH II project (intended to start in 2020). The Meeting noted the invitation for management authorities in the CPs to consider joining the potential project consortium.

7.13 The Meeting took note of the invitation to Contracting Parties by the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group to increasing the frequency of SCANS surveys to every six years to better align with MSFD reporting.

7.14 The Meeting took note of the list of nominated national contacts for updating the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database (document 7-5). The Meeting noted that Denmark will provide updated information to the list before EG MAMA 13-2019.

7.15 The Meeting took note of the presentation on the BALHAB project results on the feeding behavior of harbor porpoises based on data collected during the SAMBAH project, as presented by , Ms Ida Carlen, CCB (presentation 3).

7.16 The Meeting took note of the national activities concerning harbour porpoise:

- Germany: Michael Dähne informed the meeting that the number of porpoise strandings along the Mecklemburg-Pre Pommeranian coast have been increasing in the last couple of years, but

especially in 2018, and asked other CPs to provide information on if this is a local or a regional phenomenon. Poland and Denmark are unable confirm or deny this due to limited data.

- Finland: has continued the C-POD surveys in the Southern part of the Åland Sea and based on this information there seems to be a population spending the winters in the area. In general, incidental sightings have increased, the confidence in the sightings is however limited as this increase is believed to partly be a result of increased awareness of harbor porpoise by the public.
- Sweden: has a program for reporting sightings and strandings but highlighted that sample collecting only take place for the very recent strandings to ensure high quality information.

8.6 The Meeting agreed to change the name of the group to HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA), in line with the mandate and scope of the groups work. The Meeting further agreed to align the work within the group so that issues related to seals are considered under one session and harbor porpoises in one session, allowing for more focused work and expertise and to support further intersessional work.

Links to outcomes of CG FISHDATA 2 and CG FISHDATA 3 with relevance to bycatch issues:

[CG FISHDATA 2-2018](#)

[CG FISHDATA 3-2018](#)