

Conclusions - Joint Steering Group workshop

12 September 2024, 13-15:30 CEST

Online

This joint workshop between PA Nutri and PA Hazards is part of the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan (2021). A draft Policy Area paper should be submitted by the end of 2024. Steering Groups should be involved in the revision. This workshop will tackle some joint topics and how to include them in the revised Action plan.

1. Introduction to the Action plan revision

PAC's introduced the context of the revision and the timeline:

- **5-8/2024** BSP prepares templates for PA Actions with PACs and National Coordinators Group
- **9-12/2024** PAs prepare their first drafts with Steering Groups ←
- **1/2025** NCG decides on PAs which prepare final Actions
- **2-5/2025** PAs prepare their final Actions together with Steering Groups
- **6-7/2025** Action plan is approved with the NCG
- **8-12/2025** Action plan goes to the EC internal consultation process
- **1/2026 AP** is expected to be adopted and published (→ can feed into new MFF and funding programmes post 2027)

The current Action Plan (AP) was adopted in 2021. The update aims to make the AP more responsive to current events. It is not a new AP, but a revision. New actions could be considered, however, actions should be streamlined and preferably restricted to 2-3 actions per Policy Area. Indicators and targets will be revised, and PA's are encouraged to cooperate and coordinate their actions and activities. In addition, PA's are expected to integrate horizontal issues such as climate change and adaption, biodiversity, cooperation with third countries and Ukraine.

The revision of indicators and targets should also demonstrate the *impact* of activities, not only outcomes. It should still be realistically set goals, that are measurable. Some of the existing indicators are very vague, some have already been achieved (such as setting up a PFAS network for PA Hazards). Some indicators are tied to specific project outcomes, something that should be avoided in the future.

2. Discussion topic 1: Synergies with HELCOM

In the action plan, there are references to synergies with HELCOM in both PA Nutri and Hazards, however, these are very vague and do not indicate how it could be done. There have been good practices throughout the implementation, such as PA Nutri platforms (BSR Water and SuMaNu) projects supporting the creation of the HELCOM Regional strategy for Nutrient Recycling, and its implementation through workshops and events. In addition, many of the SG members are also members in HELCOM working groups and expert groups.

PACs raised the question if the Action Plan should remain at a general level with regard to cooperation with HELCOM, or if it would be beneficial to identify more specific activities. One possibility could be to include in the Action plan HELCOM *national actions*, where the implementation is carried out at country level. HELCOM working groups and expert groups do not follow their implementation, so it might be relevant to for example facilitate exchanging experiences, evaluate implementation, make a study, and a recommendation to support the countries.

SG members welcomed this idea of going towards more concrete activities in regards to HELCOM but underlined that some HELCOM *joint actions* might be relevant as well and suggested to keep an open door to that.

It was underlined that EUSBSR could support actors that HELCOM do not work with, such as local (subnational) authorities, local or country level NGO's and civil society, youth. It would be also important to include the whole catchment area of the Baltic Sea.

One SG member reminded that the EUSBSR structure does not have a very large budget, so activities carried out by the PAC organisations themselves should be reasonable, targeted and strategic.

3. Discussion topic 2: Potential for joint Hazards & Nutri actions

PAC's presented identified joint topics in the Action Plan:

Contaminated sediments and internal loading

PA Hazards currently has two indicators and targets aiming to:

- Develop platform for contaminated sediments, marine spatial planning and blue growth
- Action plan on remediation of contaminated sediments, incl. fiber bank and CWAs

None of these targets have been achieved. The joint Nutri & Hazards workshop on 28 February 2024 showed that there is still a need to collaborate on these issues – in particular to share information between authorities and other stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region. The question is how to handle these indicators and targets in the update, when not achieved. There is a consensus among the two SGs (and experts who attended the workshop in February) that a minimal platform, focusing only on bringing together relevant stakeholders to exchange information, would make best use of the limited budget. One problem is the lack of an actor who could run the platform. PACs propose to pilot the platform to get it going, building on the Swedish

authorities network on sediments (SESAM) and on the model of the Baltic Sea PFAS network's coffee sessions. To be decided if this should be a separate indicator, substituting the existing indicators.

Climate change is relevant to consider as well, including for example the effect of climate change on release of contaminants from sediments. Indicators should *not* be replicated under PA Nutri, since it would constitute double reporting. Provisions on this could be included in the description of the action, instead.

Safe nutrient recycling and circularity – life cycle of chemicals

Nutrient recycling is already mentioned under both PA's, however, there are no cross-references. There should be proper cross-references. No need for joint activities, but to acknowledge that both Priority Areas work towards the same objective, with different means.

Circularity and biodiversity are closely related and should be worked into the action(s). This was embraced by SG members.

One question raised by SG members was the deadline for targets. PACs informed that there is no indication for how long the action plan would run, so targets could be adapted to the needs for each action or indicator. One suggestion was to apply the deadline for the (expected) end of next EU budgetary cycle, when there is no other method for setting targets.

4. Discussion topic 3: Synergies with other EUSBSR Priority areas – how to handle it?

PA Hazards and PA Nutri have several common topics. There are other relevant Policy Areas, however, such as PA Bioeconomy, Ship, Safe. To align the actions does not necessarily mean to create joint actions. It could be possible to create joint indicators, or to foresee joint activities such as an event or a study. As a minimum, cross-references to other PAs to make sure that actions are aligned and complement each other is necessary.

SG members mentioned that nutrients in shipping and release of hazardous substances would be relevant to discuss with PA Ship.

HELCOM informed that they are observers in the steering groups of PA Safe and Ship as well.

PACs proposed that the coordination on these topics would be done between coordinators, rather than on SG level, to simplify the process as much as possible and not to burden the SG members too much. The SGs would still approve the suggestions made by PACs. This was accepted as a working method by the SGs.

5. Discussion topic 4: Integration of horizontal aspects

The European Commission and the National Coordinators Group (?) have underlined the importance to integrate the horizontal aspects into each PA. The NCG will propose a joint climate indicator for each PA to use.

- Climate change:

- Climate adaptation and resilient water management
- Mitigation through replacing fertilizers with fertilizers made from recycled materials
- Developing knowledge about how hazardous substances stored in sediments / internal loading are affected by climate change
- Biodiversity:
 - Circularity & nutrient loop
 - Biodiversity aspects in water management (nature-based solutions)
- Cooperation with third countries and Ukraine:
 - Could be done through cooperation with other MRS such as the Danube strategy, in order to avoid a text too prescriptive, seeing as we do not know for how long the Action plan will be in force and what might change.

Follow-up

The outcome of this workshop will be taken into account when drafting the revised Policy area papers. PAC's will coordinate with other relevant PA's in the drafting process, and bring in the Steering Groups when necessary. PA Hazards and PA Nutri will organize separate workshops/meetings in order to finalise the papers.

Participants				
Country	Name	Organisation	Participation	PA
DENMARK	Caroline Marie Myhre	Ministry of Environment	Yes	Nutri
DENMARK	Frank Jensen	Miljøstyrelsen/ Danish Environmental Protection Agency	Yes	Hazards
FINLAND	Henna Rinne	Ministry of the Environment	Yes	Nutri
FINLAND	Jukka Mehtonen	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Yes	Hazards
GERMANY	Heike Imhoff Ulrike Pirntke	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection German Environment Agency	Yes	Hazards
LATVIA	Baiba Zasa	Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional development	Yes	Nutri
POLAND	Magdalena Frydrych	Bureau for Chemical substances	Provided input beforehand	Hazards
SWEDEN	Anders Wallberg	Ministry for Climate and Enterprise	Yes	Hazards
Sweden	Josefin Hjort	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water management	Yes	Nutri
Observers				
IGO	Lotta Ruokanen	HELCOM secretariat	Yes	Hazards/Nutri
SWEDEN	Maria Linderöth	Swedish Chemicals Agency	Yes	Hazards
GUESTS				
Youth advisor	Simona Jakaitė	CBSS Baltic Sea Youth Forum	Yes	Hazards
Youth advisor	Oliwia Pierzgałska	CBSS Baltic Sea Youth Forum	Yes	Hazards
Policy Area coordinators				
PAC	Elsi Kauppinen	Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for Southwest Finland	Yes	Nutri
Co-PAC	Jan Pryzowiicz	National Water Management Authority	Yes	Nutri
PAC	Louise Floman	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water management	Yes	Hazards