

## The 7<sup>th</sup> Session of Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning on Maritime Spatial Planning

17 October 2025, Helsinki, Finland

(7-2025 SG EUSBSR PA SP on MSP)

The Steering Group (SG) was attended by representatives of Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as well as by the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. HELCOM observers were represented by Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB). The Session was also attended by invited guests representing UNESCO, the EU Technical Expert-Group on data for MSP, the BEMIP Working Group, the BLUE4ALL and SELINA projects and the EU MSP Assistance Mechanism.

The SG was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group; Penina Blankett, Finland and Kai Trümpler, Germany. Coordinators of Policy Area Spatial Planning Tina Šipkēvica (VASAB Secretariat) and Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky (HELCOM Secretariat) acted as secretaries of the SG. Since the Steering Group meeting is an integral part of the sixth informal consultation Steering Group of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 6-2024), documents submitted to the Steering Group meeting and presentations are numbered accordingly.

### Information on recent developments and activities related to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Action Plan and Policy area (PA) Spatial Planning

1. The Steering Group noted the information on the developments and activities related to the EUSBSR and PA Spatial Planning (PA SP) (document 6-1, presentation 17).
2. The Steering Group noted the information on the developments and activities related to the EUSBSR and PA Spatial Planning (PA SP) (document 6-1, presentation 17).
3. The Steering Group noted the draft action related to MSP under the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan, and that there are no changes or suggestions for the Action 1 on land-based spatial planning (document 6-2 Rev.1 and attachment).
4. The Steering Group discussed, revised and approved the description of PA SP and Action 2 on MSP as it is given in Attachment 2 to this Memo (Memo Att.1).

### Follow-up the implementation of PASPS project and the workplan for 2025-2026

5. The Steering Group considered the updated draft of the Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning and a draft Recommendation on application of an ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea region as presented by the Chair of Task Force on EBA in MSP (document 4-4 and attachments).
6. The Steering Group noted that the Guideline has not undergone any substantial changes since the last consideration. However, the document was edited in relation for terminological consistency as recommended by HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, HELCOM WG GEAR and WG BioDiv.
7. The Steering Group welcomed the document package consisting of the Recommendation and the Guideline and thanked the Task Force for excellent work done. The Session

further noted that the package is in line with the Polish vision of the regional framework for EBA in MSP.

8. The Steering Group scrutinized the draft Recommendation (document 4-4 Att.1) and amended it.

9. The Steering Group further recommended to submit a revised final draft Recommendation after the Task Force session via correspondence to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to recommend its submission to the IC HOD 8-2025 and the next VASAB CSPD for approval, noting that the HELCOM HOD document submission deadline is 24 November 2025.

10. The Steering Group recalled that the countries are responsible for updating their national information, i.e. the content of the country fiches.

11. The Steering Group recommended to further explore the possible format of the country fiches both on data gathering and publishing point of views, noting that HELCOM Secretariat has the relevant ESRI licenses for creating and maintaining StoryMaps but acknowledging that they are more difficult to update regularly compared to some other formats. The Steering Group recalled that also dashboards were discussed during IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP 6-2025, proposed to study technical requirements for a dashboard and to consider if combining these approaches would be possible.

12. The Steering Group considered the multiple entry points to the country fiches and similar data, proposed to have just one entry point for the actual input of the national MSP status in the future and link that to other websites. The Steering Group pointed out that the EU MSP Platform information is currently not regularly updated and proposed to take into account other European Commission's possibilities on supporting databases in future work.

13. The Steering Group acknowledged that the new VASAB website might not be able to technically host a new country fiches system, but that the VASAB Secretariat welcomes any solutions where the website could be used just as a platform for publishing products or tools on external servers.

14. The Steering Group discussed the proposal of first move from the Word to a Powerpoint template with less content but proposed to study further before doing any additional work or intermediate solutions.

15. The Steering Group pointed out that EUSBSR sees the country fiches as evidence of collaboration between the countries in the region and that this is an example that also external stakeholders outside the MSP community are important to reach.

#### [Progress in the work of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group](#)

16. The Steering Group noted the information on the latest developments under the BSR MSP Data ESG shared orally by the Chair of the group. The last Steering Group, IC BSR MSP DATA ESG 7-2025, was held on 13 October 2025 in Helsinki and the Memo is available on the Steering Group site.

17. The Steering Group noted the information on the progress in GNSBI presented by Sweden. The Steering Group also noted the progress related to MSP and key discussion points such as early MSP dialogue and links between the informal North Sea MSP Collaboration Group and GNSBI and that GNSBI's work track "Nature" is focussed on the development of examples of maps showing ecosystem hotspots mainly from a restoration perspective.

18. The Steering Group welcomed the plan for practical cooperation between BSR MSP Data ESG and GNSBI in relation to further development of regional data sharing system and data related to offshore wind farms.

19. The Steering Group noted that IC BSR MSP DATA ESG 7-2025 recommend approval of the draft Guidelines on transboundary MSP output data structure in the Baltic Sea, including amendments, for submission to IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 7-2025 during its last Steering Group.

The attachments to the document 5-1 contain the same versions recommended by IC BSR MSP DATA ESG 7-2025. The Steering Group recommended the draft Guideline for approval.

20. The Steering Group welcomed the final deliverables of the ReMAP project and discussed how they support the work strands of the group (document 5-2 and presentation 15). The Steering Group noted that all 10 tools are available on the ReMAP landing page.

21. The Steering Group recalled ReMAP's final hands-on conference on 14-15 October 2025 in Helsinki, back-to-back with this Steering Group where project outputs were presented in more details and the participants could test the tools. The Steering Group pointed out that the tools produced by the ReMAP project offer diverse functionalities and require in depth consideration at national level. The applicability of some tools (e.g. MSP output data tool) is to be carefully related to the EU Member States data system. The Steering Group noted that different tools might be more suitable for certain national MSP systems than others.

22. The Steering Group highlighted that one of the challenges is that ReMAP tools utilize the data made available on EMODnet, for which some countries have issue to make their data available. The Steering Group noted that the tools are open source and could be tailored for specific national needs. The Steering Group highlighted the need to address cross-border aspect in the data analysis which might be difficult with the current tools developed by the project. The Steering Group also pointed out that the uncertainties should be carefully addressed when interpreting outputs of ReMAP results.

23. The Steering Group noted that ReMAP results will be presented at other events and conferences such as the EU MSEG next week and suggested arranging a deeper discussion on the use of the ReMAP tools in the frame of the BSR MSP Data ESG.

24. The Steering Group noted the last development of the EU Technical Group (TEG) on data for MSP, shared by the Co-Chair of the TEG, invited guest to this Steering Group (presentation 16).

25. The Steering Group welcomed the work done by EU TEG, which is of high relevance to the work of BSR MSP Data ESG, and expressed hope for further cooperation. The Steering Group noted of the suggestion by Finland to consider the integration of categories of specific archipelago data in EMODnet using eHILUCS.

26. The Steering Group further discussed an issue raised by Finland regarding integration of private water areas in respective datasets. In this relation, the Steering Group noted the clarification that the hierarchical data structure with respective extension enables flexibility of data integration as well as various solutions how to report data to EMODnet.

27. The Steering Group noted that improvement of coordination between the INSPIRE Directive, MSP Directive and MSFD is to be further investigated.

#### Planners' Forum and identification of project ideas

28. The Steering Group considered the results of the latest Planners' Forum as well as the planning of the next event, welcomed the work done and encouraged national representatives to participate in the Forum (document 6-3 and presentation 18).

#### Follow-up and progress of regional projects and/or initiatives – outputs of high regional significance

29. The Steering Group noted the information on the progress of the SEABAS project platform and contribution to workplan tasks 3.2 and 3.5 (document 4-6 and presentation 9). The Steering Group also noted the clarification from Sweden highlighting relevance of this work in line with the revision of the EBA guidelines.

30. The Steering Group noted the information on the MSP4BIO joint policy brief with other relevant projects (document 4-7 and attachment) recalling that this policy brief was expected to be utilized to support implementing the task 3.4 (cf. IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 6.2025, memo paras 4.32-4.38). The Steering Group further recalled that the final event of MSP4BIO was held in Venice on 2-4 July 2025.

31. The Steering Group noted the information on equity work under BLUE4ALL project presented by an invited guest representing the project (document 4-15 and presentation 10). The Steering Group noted the forthcoming equity webinar to be held on 29 October 2025.

32. The Steering Group noted the information on the SELINA project presented by an invited guest from the Finnish Environment Institute (Syke) representing the project (presentation 12).

33. The Steering Group noted the Progress in the NESBp project with the focus on the questionnaire on conservation restoration and mitigation measures planned under WP3 of the project (document 6-4 and attachments).

34. The Steering Group supported the questionnaire and recommended to assist in identification of relevant national contacts. The Steering Group suggested to consider passive restoration measures in the questionnaire.

35. The Steering Group recommended to provide contact points for the questionnaire to the Secretariat (dmitry.frank-kamentsky@helcom.fi) no later than 24 October 2025. A reminder will be circulated by the Secretariat.

36. The Steering Group recalled the task 1.1 of the MSP Roadmap 2030 which includes a common set of general definitions and pointed out that projects such as eMSP, NESBp and PROTECT BALTIC were expected contributing to the implementation of this task.

#### [Any other issues related to the work of the Steering Group](#)

30. The Steering Group recommended to organize the next Steering Group as an integral part of IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 8-2026 tentatively on 21-23 April 2026 in Tallinn hosted by Estonia.