

Memo of the fifth Informal Consultation Session of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 5-2024)

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Introduction

0.1 The fifth Informal Consultation Session of the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 5-2024), hosted by Latvia, was held on 18-20 September 2024 in Riga.

0.2 The Session was attended by representatives of Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as well as HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. HELCOM observers were represented by Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB). The Session was also attended by invited guests representing the EU MSP Platform, the eMSP NBSR project, the joint expert network of HELCOM and Baltic Earth (EN CLIME), the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat, the Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon, the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) as well as DG Regio. The list of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Session was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group; Joacim Johannesson, Sweden and Kai Trümpler, Germany.

0.4 The Co-Chairs opened the Session and welcomed the participants.

0.5 The Session recalled the current strategic pause of official HELCOM Meetings, until further notice, in the HELCOM work due to the political situation.

0.6 Lotta Ruokanen, HELCOM Professional Secretary; Florent Nicolas, Associate Professional Secretary and Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, Special Advisor, acted as Secretaries of the Session.

Agenda Item 1

Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Session adopted the agenda and its revised annotations elaborated by HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats in consultation with the Co-Chairs and vice-Chair of the Working Group (**documents 1-1 and 1-2 Rev.2**).

Agenda Item 2

Matters arising from other HELCOM and VASAB work

Matters arising from HELCOM work

2.1 The Session took note of the information on the HELCOM activities since IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024 (**document 2-1**). The Session took note that more information on the Helsinki Convention 50th anniversary celebration and Ministerial Meeting can be found [here](#) (e.g. video “MOTION”, programme, speakers, video and photo galleries, etc.).

Matters arising from VASAB work

2.2 The Session took note on the matters arising from VASAB work and (**document 2-2**).

Agenda Item 3

Intergovernmental cooperation and follow-up of MSP processes

[Workplan of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG: implementation with communication needs, next workplan 2025-2027](#)

3.1 The Session recalled the survey launched from 3 July to 15 August 2024 to prepare the drafting process of the workplan for the period 2025-2027 and that some countries did not respond to this survey (**document 3-1**). The Session considered the draft workplan for the group for 2025-2027 deriving from the survey and further elaborated it. The new draft deriving from this exercise is available as **attachment 1** to this Memo ([Memo Att.1](#)).

3.2 The Session welcomed the offer from further countries to contribute to implementing some of the tasks. The Session welcomed the offer from Germany to lead task 1.2, Latvia to lead the task 1.3, Poland to lead the task 2.4 and Germany, Finland and Latvia to co-lead the task 5.2.

3.3 The Session recommended this new draft to be submitted to HOD 6-2024 (11-12 December 2024) for recommendation for approval and to VASAB CSPD/BSR for approval and recalled that the template for the final workplan might be updated at a later stage.

[Status of planning the interim assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation, based on the proposal by the Task Force](#)

3.4 The Session took note of the information on the latest developments in planning the interim assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation and recalled the approved workplan for this process (**document 3-2** and **presentation 1**).

3.5 The Session took note of the proposal for the survey to support the interim assessment of the implementation Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 prepared by the dedicated Task Force (**document 3-10** and **presentation 1**). The session discussed the content of the survey, for example on approaching other sectors. The Session noted that the survey (questionnaire) will be shared to the members of this group to be forwarded to relevant contacts (e.g. stakeholders, etc.). The Session noted that the Task Force would need to know to which contacts it will be shared to ensure that the survey is well built for these stakeholders.

3.6 The Session noted the importance in nominating new members to the Task Force and invited the countries and observers to liaise with Germany (bettina.kaeppler@bsh.de) as well as the HELCOM Secretariat (florent.nicolas@helcom.fi) to nominate such new members. The Session welcomed the offer from Latvia to join the task force.

3.7 The Session considered how to take the assessment process into account in the workplan for the Working Group for 2025-2027 (cf. paras 3.1 - 3.3 of this Memo).

[Regional MSP follow-up mechanism \(information on recent development of national MSP process\) and country fiches update](#)

3.8 The Session considered the state of the information provided by the countries in the living document made available [here](#) on the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG dedicated workspace and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to clean up the document with e.g. updating colour codes.

3.9 The Session took note that before the sessions of the group some countries check updates and acknowledged that the country fiches are also a useful source of information on other countries processes.

3.10 The Session further took note that:

- Finland has had an evaluation on the impact of strategic MSP and the development of its effectiveness. A law on offshore wind power in the EEZ is being prepared, in which the MSP is not mentioned. However, the maritime spatial plans are taken into account when defining offshore wind power areas;

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- Sweden is in the final stages of the elaboration of a proposal for revised MSP with connections to process related to the Espoo Convention;
 - Poland is currently working on a report on the national plan by the end of the year with e.g. considerations on offshore wind energy with the revision process;
 - Germany (Federal State Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) will be assigning more areas for offshore wind energy in the Baltic Sea territorial waters.

3.11 The Session proposed to change the name of the process to “Regional tracking mechanism for national MSP developments” as more semantically correct than using the word “follow-up”.

[Information from the Countries on testing the approach described in the Regional MSP coherence report](#)

3.12 The Session exchanged views on the topic of the lack of consultations in MSP process (**document 3-9**).

3.13 The Session took note of the clarification that Poland considers Espoo process for MSP only containing SEA aspects but not any other matters that are thus lacking and that the wish would be for countries’ MSP authorities to inform to and invite feedback from other countries with collaborative process (e.g. meetings, etc.).

3.14 The Session took note that Sweden includes other planning issues in the scope of the Espoo consultations in addition to the main environmental and apply notification at an early stage of the planning process but that there are also limitations for the Espoo process and complementary processes may be needed, for example for matters related to harmonising shipping lanes and carrying out joint assessments of impacts.

3.15 The Session took note of the view of Germany that the [guidelines on transboundary consultations](#) lack specific guidance on how to address different matters.

3.16 The Session took note of the views of several countries that the first Swedish planning round was an exemplary one regarding practical application of the guidelines and with approaching all other countries in the Baltic Sea region early in the process.

3.17 The Session pointed out that countries have different types of planning processes and different levels of how binding the plans are, with some more specific and binding as well as some more strategic ones and thus there might be challenges in identifying the right authorities to contact in other countries.

3.18 The Session proposed to confirm that evaluating and tracking progress of carrying out consultations is included in the draft workplan of the group (revision of the guidelines, task 2.4) and to utilize the Planners’ Forum for concrete discussions on the matter.

3.19 The Session took note of the progress in testing the approach described in the [Regional MSP coherence report](#) carried out within the eMSP NBSR project, for example that having an external facilitator was very helpful in keeping the discussions between Finland and Estonia on tracks (**document 3-3**).

3.20 The Session also took note of the presentation by the invited guest representing the eMSP NBSR project on the findings from the bilateral discussions which are published in the report [MSP in a sea of change – aim for better and connected plans](#) under the chapter 3.8.3 (**presentation 2**).

3.21 The Session pointed out that the experiences shared are also related to the previous discussion on the lack of consultations and acknowledged that there will be even more time constraints for coherence aspects and consultations in the MSP revision processes compared to the original preparation of the plans.

3.22 The Session took note of the clarification that the proposed checklist could be considered by a future project such as the new Northern European Sea Basins project (NESBp) (cf. para 3.30 of this Memo).

The Session further took note of the proposal that the existing regional coherence should be sustained in a fast-changing reality in the MSP revision processes.

3.23 The Session supported the proposed checklist to be developed further and to be used in the MSP revision processes and acknowledged the value of collaborating even better in the future. The Session proposed to take this topic into account in the draft workplan task 2.4 on the methodology to deal with the coherence due to the interlinkages.

[Hosting HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R and 17/3 and revising the Recommendation 17/3](#)

3.24 The Session considered the proposal to update the HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 R and its reporting form prepared by the drafting group (Finland, Sweden, Latvia and HELCOM Secretariat) (**document 3-4 Rev.2, Att.1 and Att.2**).

3.25 The Session took note of the clarification that the revision of the Recommendation 24/10 R is about updating the important political processes and status of MSP in the region and not including any substantial new content as such.

3.26 The Session invited the VASAB Secretariat to provide a proposal on wording of the VASAB coastal planning and development recommendations revision (cf. document 4-8 and paras 4.24-4.26 of this Memo) to the preamble and possible other input and further invited the Contracting Parties and Observers to provide comments to the draft revised Recommendation 24/10R by **2 October 2024** to the HELCOM Secretariat (florent.nicolas@helcom.fi). The Session recommended the drafting group to finalize a further elaborated draft based on the comments. The Session further invited the HELCOM and VASAB secretariats to plan how to align the processes of recommendation revision (cf. documents 3-4 Rev.2 and 4-8 as well as paras 4.24-4.26 of this Memo) to be submitted to the group intersessionally for recommendation for approval.

3.27 The Session considered the information on the need for a revision of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/3 (**document 3-5**) and welcomed the proposal by CCB to contribute to the revision process. The Session discussed the need for revision and the possible overlap with the guidelines on transboundary consultations and how this should be taken into account (cf. task 2.4 in the draft workplan, document 3-9) and took note of the clarification that the Contracting Parties mostly consider the mentioned guidelines to be more relevant for planning than the Recommendation 17/3.

3.28 The Session considered the proposal made by the HELCOM Secretariat on which HELCOM body could be responsible for the revision of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/3 (**document 3-6**). The Session recommended the proposed way forward with the WG Sea-based Pressures to take the lead in the revision process, acknowledging that the Recommendation is still relevant for MSP and that consulting the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG as well as GEAR WG would be important. The Session further invited the HELCOM Secretariat to submit the relevant document to IC WG SEA-BASED PRESSURES 4-2024 (4-6 November 2024) on behalf of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

[eMSP NBSR report document as guiding framework for harmonized MSP monitoring and evaluation framework](#)

3.29 The Session scrutinized [eMSP NBSR project](#) outputs related to Monitoring and Evaluation of Maritime Spatial Plans (**document 3-7**). The Session concluded on their use for the development of respective regional guiding framework, supporting the partial implementation of the current workplan task 1.1.

3.30 The Session took note that the new project Northern European Sea Basins project (NESBp) funded by EMFAF aims to continue the work done under eMSP NBSR (cf. para 3.22 of this Memo).

3.31 The Session took note of the view by Finland that international Communities of Practice (CoPs) have challenges because of different operating environments, however acknowledging that the eMSP NBSR CoPs had a lot of active contributors both attending events and providing written input to project processes, and that a clear project management process is needed to steer the work of CoPs.

3.32 The Session took note of the clarification that majority of the members of the CoPs in the eMSP NBSR project's EBA learning strand were scientists and authorities with also representatives from civil society (i.e. NGOs) but representative of private sector was rather limited, and that the members were classified to four different groups, for example contributors and followers.

3.33 The Session further took note of the clarification that CoPs are a way of reaching to different sectors and stakeholders informally under projects besides the formal stakeholder processes within actual planning processes.

[Preparation of the 5th Baltic MSP Forum as the conference on the multi-level coastal governance \(BalticSea2Land Final Conference\) and MSP implementation in the BSR](#)

3.34 The Session took note of the preliminary information on the preparation of the 5th Baltic MSP Forum/Baltic Sea2Land project final conference as contained in the **document 3-8** and **presentation 3**. The Session noted that the countries and observers are invited to contact VASAB Secretariat (emils.rode@vasab.org, margarita.volosina@vasab.org) to suggest workshop leaders and themes.

3.35 The Session further took note of the information by Latvia on the relevance to have a workshop on the regional governance related to MSP in the Baltic Sea Region, for example via the information available from evaluation of the country fiches.

[Regional, European and global MSP related events of relevance to the Working Group](#)

3.36 The Session took note of the update of the [EU MSP platform calendar](#) which is gathering information on Regional, European and global MSP related event. The Session recalled that the European MSP Week will be held on 21-24 October 2024 in Marseille, France. The next EU MSEG on MSP meeting will be held during this week, as well the joint final conference of the MSP-Green and REGINA-MSP projects and a ReMAP project workshop.

[Updates on links with relevant scientific frameworks and maritime knowledge as well as education of MSP planners](#)

3.37 The Session took note of the presentation given on the work done under the ICES WG for Marine Planning and Coastal Zone Management (ICES WGMPCZM) given by one of the co-Chairs of this WG and invited guest to this session (**presentation 4**). The Session took note of the recent [offshore renewable energy roadmap](#) which aims to fully incorporate the rapid expansion of offshore renewable energy in ICES activities presented by a member of this WG and invited guest to this session (**presentation 5**).

3.38 The Session considered the questions targeting to this group in **presentation 5**. The Session invited the HELCOM Secretariat to prepare an online file to be shared with the contacts of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to provide answers to the ICES WGMPCZM. The ICES WGMPCZM will provide the specific questions and some guidance on format. The countries will be invited to answer to the questions by **20 October 2024**. Passed this deadline, the HELCOM Secretariat will provide the answers to the representatives of the ICES WGMPCZM.

3.39 The Session highlighted the needs for future cooperation between the two groups, noting that the format of such cooperation should be further discussed. The Session recalled the task 1.7 of the current workplan on links with relevant scientific frameworks and maritime knowledge; education of MSP planners and collaboration with the ICES WG as well as the inclusion of this topic in the draft workplan for 2025-27.

3.40 The Session noted multiple common topics between ICES WGMPCZM scientific agenda and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG work and recommended to establish regular cooperation with ICES WGMPCZM. The Session proposed that cooperation might first involve the co-Chairs of the two groups and the Secretariats as minimum to identify common objectives and priorities. However, all HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG members and other members of WGMPCZM are welcomed to participate actively.

3.41 The Session invited the HELCOM Secretariat together with ICES Secretariat and the Co-Chairs of the groups to prepare a joint planning meeting to be held online before the end of the year and sharing the invitation to the contacts of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

3.42 The Session invited ICES representatives to present the results of work on scientific advice at the spring session of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

Agenda Item 4

Regional policy coherence and MSP framework

[MSP for nature conservation and good environmental status \(framework for accounting for nature in MSP\)](#)

4.1 The Session took note of the information that the final report of the survey on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for MSP in the Baltic Sea Region has been published by the European MSP Platform and it is now available [here](#) (**document 4-1**). The Session recalled that the current process of revising of the Guideline for the application of EBA in MSP includes recommendations on impact assessment and evaluation in MSP. However, the chapter of the Guideline does not fully cover the topic of SEA and that this report aims to cover more broadly.

4.2 The Session pointed out that the report of the survey can be utilized as a starting point for the development of the regional SEA framework, which is one of the tasks of the draft HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG workplan 2025-2027 (task 3.2). The Session encouraged the HELCOM Secretariat to utilize the report in a project application which is intended to lead the implementation of the task (cf. para 6.25 of this Memo).

4.3 The Session noted that the HOLAS 3 methodology for regional cumulative impact assessment was not considered in the report which is primarily based on the overview of respective national inputs (i.e. the survey). The Session recommended to consider the experience gained during HOLAS process in the development of the regional SEA framework and to include respective actions in the planned project application (cf. para 6.25 of this Memo).

4.4 The Session took note of the information that during the ASCOBANS 10th Meeting of Parties, held this month in Odense, Denmark, the [Resolution 10.5 Maritime Spatial Planning](#), including the 'Guidelines for Cetacean-sensitive MSP for the ASCOBANS Area' was approved by the Parties. The guidelines for [Cetacean-sensitive Maritime Spatial Planning for the ASCOBANS Area](#) were also adopted. Furthermore, the revision of the resolution on the [Baltic Proper Harbour Porpoise](#) was adopted. The Session also took note that also the following resolutions relevant to HELCOM work have been adopted:

- [Res.10.6](#) Mitigating the Impacts of Recreational Activities on Small Cetaceans
- [Res.10.7](#) Shallow-water Mining and Small Cetaceans
- [Res.6.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#) Adverse Effects of Underwater Noise on Marine Mammals during Offshore Construction Activities for Renewable Energy Production
- [Res.8.6 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#) Ocean Energy
- [Res.10.2](#) ASCOBANS Work Plan 2025-2028.

4.5 The Session did not discuss further how the ASCOBANS guidelines for Cetacean-sensitive Maritime Spatial Planning for the ASCOBANS area can be applied to MSP since this topic was already covered during the last session. However, the Session recalled that harbour porpoise will be discussed under the topic of the joint dedicated session between the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and WG BioDiv (cf. paras 4.14-4.16 of this Memo).

4.6 The Session took note of the information that WG BioDiv is currently discussing HELCOM's role in the new EU Nature Restoration Law implementation versus the EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030 and that further information on the processes will be provided in spring 2025. The Session noted that the cross-referencing of CBD Global Biodiversity Targets and HELCOM BSAP actions presented as a draft in the last session is now published [here](#).

4.7 The Session also took note of the information (i.e. Nature Restoration Law) shared by Latvia and the European Commission (i.e. MSFD update) on the current processes related to these EU policies and noted that more information will be available at a later stage for this group to discuss.

4.8 The Session took note of the policy recommendations developed by the MSP4BIO (**document 4-2**). The session regretted that no national responses were sent to the Secretariat before the Session and invited the countries to send their contribution by **18 October 2024** to the HELCOM Secretariat (kemal.pinarbasi@helcom.fi).

4.9 The Session took note of the results of HOLAS 3 on ecosystem services maps (**presentation 6**), recalling that this presentation was proposed by IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024 to verify partial implementation of the workplan task 3.4 (output on draft green infrastructure maps) and that the task will continue in the draft workplan 2025-27.

4.10 The Session took note of the progress achieved so far and the plan to finalize the revision of the Guidelines for the application of EBA in MSP (**document 4-12 and attachments**). The plan is to have a more advanced draft to be considered by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG in the next session as well as other relevant HELCOM subsidiary bodies.

4.11 The Session took note that the draft will also be submitted to IC HOD 7-2025 to be held in June 2025 to get initial feedback on the document, as well as to VASAB CSPD/BSR. The final draft of the revised Guideline will be submitted to the autumn session of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG in 2025.

4.12 The Session took note of the document submitted by CCB on OECM recommendation (**document 4-11**). The Contracting Parties informed the session on their work on OECMs and how the CCB recommendations can be used in future work on this topic as follows:

- Sweden: national discussions with MPA experts are ongoing and the position is that a precautionary approach should be taken considering actual conservation effects;
- Finland will provide the report prepared by CCB to OECM national experts. There is a proposal by Biodiversea LIFE IP project on possible marine OECMs. This proposal is for now a draft in Finnish and it is acknowledged that the contribution to biodiversity is difficult to assess in OECMs. This topic will be discussed in IC WG BIODIV 4-2024;
- Germany: needs more time with OECMs discussion but the agreed regional position is taken into account in national considerations.

4.13 The Session proposed to continue the discussion on OECMs also in the next session of the group as relevant also for the draft workplan 2025-2027 task 3.4.

4.14 The Session took note of the proposal for the joint dedicated session between the HELCOM-VASAB MSP and BioDiv WGs, to be held online on 7 October 2024 from 10:30 to 13:00 EEST (9:30-12:00 CEST) (document 4-9). The Session noted that the invitation was sent to the contacts of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and invited the Contracting Parties to inform the HELCOM Secretariat (florent.nicolas@helcom.fi) by **30 September 2024** on their plans to attend the joint session.

4.15 The Session discussed the proposal and recommended the following questions to be submitted to IC WG BIODIV 4-2024 by the HELCOM Secretariat to initiate discussions during the joint dedicated session:

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- To discuss the already proposed questions, with adding to the first question the possible positive impacts on some ecosystem compartments besides the harbour porpoise, such as benthic habitats;
 - Achievability of the 30%/10% by 2030 goal and the possibly different approaches of MPA management plans, measures and their relations to and expectations from MSP inside and outside MPAs, e.g. regulating offshore wind installations or shipping in MPAs and possible multi-use;
 - Which measures to have outside MPAs for highly mobile species and their reflection in MSP, with the challenge that actually even 30%/10% by 2030 is not considered to be enough to protect them to mitigate harms caused by different activities;
 - To consider how and to which extent cumulative effects in cross-border regions is included in management plans;
 - Seasonality and timing of activities (e.g. producing noise) in the MPA management plans and coordination or coherence of them between countries;
 - The whole Baltic Sea approach on expected offshore wind developments and their cumulative impacts to the harbour porpoise population;
 - Temporal regulations e.g. in noise abatement related to construction or speed limits connected to EEZ space even though not specifically spatial;
 - Possibilities to utilize blue-green infrastructures in the upcoming revised MSPs.

4.16 The Session pointed out that also some non-spatial measures might be discussed that are not directly related to MSP but recommended to have broad approach on setting the questions as planning and management should be linked while still keeping the focus in MSP.

4.17 The Session took note of the information on noise mitigating pile driving methods and experiences in the German EEZ presented by representatives of Orsted (**document 4-10** and **presentation 7**).

4.18 The Session discussed the results on using the method, its effects on sound environment and turbidity, pointing out that compared to conventional pile driving the results seem very promising. The Session took note that with the continued growth of offshore wind installations the possibilities of market diversification to smaller and bigger installations depends on developers' motivation to build bigger wind turbines and on global trends and how the European market reacts to those.

4.19 The Session took note of the view of CCB pointing out that other aspects of underwater noise such as continuous noise should be kept in mind both with construction and maintenance of windfarms.

4.20 The Session took note that the HELCOM Secretariat has already invited Germany to submit a similar document to the 2nd Informal consultation session on the implementation of the RAP Noise ([IC RAP Noise 2-2024](#)) to be held online on 29 October 2024.

4.21 The Session took note of clarification that the methodology is well functioning when compared to the bubble curtain method used in pile driving technology, with reducing the sound at source (and not in the water column) in the range of 20-40 dB.

4.22 The Session took note that scalability is possible with adding more nozzles and jets and that related to acoustic elements each doubling would increase the sound levels by 3 dB.

4.23 The Session took note that licencing is expected when the technology is fully matured in a few years' time and for the methodology becoming an industrial standard as a regular deployment of installations. The Session took note that taking into account sound abatement and not only costs would be important on encouraging quicker and broader use of this technology from the regulatory point of view.

[MSP for sustainable blue economy \(framework for social and economic considerations in MSP\)](#)

4.24 The Session took note of the information that the co-Chairs had further exchange with representatives of the BEMIP WG following IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024 during an online meeting. However, the HELCOM Secretariat could not attend this meeting. The Session invited the co-Chairs and the HELCOM Secretariat to have an additional meeting with BEMIP WG representatives to further discuss potential cooperation and to inform the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG during its next session.

4.25 The Session recalled that IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024 took note of the information that discussions within a group formed by Germany, Denmark and The Netherlands on planning shipping routes are still ongoing, and the session invited Germany to provide an update on the matter during the next session of the WG. The Session took note of the organization of discussions on planning shipping routes (**presentation 8**).

4.26 The Session took note of clarification that in the Baltic Sea similar collaborative process could be different because geographical restrictions at least in the southern Baltic Sea, and thus there are restrictions in flexibility in planning the shipping lanes. The Session further took note that there have been initial discussions on shipping lanes related to the MSP revision process in the Baltic Sea side within the Northern Approach.

4.27 The Session pointed out that safety and/or buffer zones are a national issue and related to the wind turbines, in Germany there is always a 500 m safety zone. The Session recalled that no regional guidance exists on distance considerations between the shipping and offshore wind, and took note that a [Dutch White Paper on Offshore Wind Energy](#) introduces safety distances based on ship length and shipping intensity and that PIANC has adopted a similar paper (i.e. [Interaction Between Offshore Wind Farms and Maritime Navigation – PIANC](#))

4.28 The Session took note that in Latvia shipping zones are different compared to other sub-regions of the Baltic Sea being politically determined and that in the revision process of the national MSP the aim is to revise the zones to be more practical. The Session invited Latvia to liaise with Germany to share experiences on planning shipping lanes.

4.29 The Session took note that the HELCOM Secretariat did not receive additional information on a potential project related to navigation safety and offshore energy planned by EUSBSR PA Safe and PA Ship as recommended by IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024. The Session invited the Secretariat to liaise with the coordinators of these PAs and to inform the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG on the matter during its next session for further planning on how to engage with HELCOM WG MARITIME and EG Safe Nav via PAs Ship and Safe (tasks 2.2 and 2.3 also in the draft workplan 2025-27).

4.30 The Session took note of the information shared by the HELCOM Secretariat that the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage has 77 Parties and entered into force on 2 January 2009, for those States that have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession in accordance with its [Article 27](#). From the Baltic Sea region, the following countries have ratified it: Estonia, Lithuania and Poland.

4.31 The Session recalled the proposal to discuss the recommendations deriving from the BalticRIM project presented in HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 21-2020 and to consider a way forward to add underwater heritage as a regular topic of discussion for the WG. The Session invited the HELCOM Secretariat to add a proposal to the draft workplan 2025-2027 on how to address the matter regularly in the future in the work of the group.

4.32 The Session took note of the possible revision of VASAB recommendations on coastal planning and development as well as the initial results of a [survey](#) launched with the support of the Baltic Sea2Land project (**document 4-8** and **presentation 9**). The Session noted that some countries (i.e. Germany, Denmark) did not yet answer to the survey and invited the members of the group to share the survey in their networks. The deadline to participate in survey is extended to 21 October 2024.

4.33 The Session noted that since 1996 when this recommendation was adopted, the economic landscape and patterns in terms of transportation have changed which might bring major changes in the recommendation. The Session also noted that some HELCOM Recommendations are noted in the current VASAB Recommendation (15/1 and 16/3) and that the status of the HELCOM Recommendations should be checked and possibly updated too.

4.34 The Session noted that possible revision of this recommendation would happen under the scope of the Baltic Sea2Land project, and the final draft would be presented during the 5th MSP Forum in autumn 2025. The Session recalled the process of updating the HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R (cf. paras 3.24-3.26 of this Memo) and proposed that the revisions of the recommendations should be aligned as they include planning of coastal areas. The Session invited the Secretariats to liaise and to suggest to the group in its next session how these two processes can be possibly merged.

4.35 The Session took note that the workshop organized by Baltic Sea2Land project on ecosystem service assessments' integration to MSP and coastal planning was related to internal project capacity building and that there is no direct input for this group.

4.36 The Session took note of the information on the latest developments related to collaboration of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and ESA EG (**document 4-3**). The Session took note of the proposal prepared by Finland, Sweden and the HELCOM Secretariat on the structure of a joint event (**presentation 10**) in form of a brainstorming exercise to identify tools and methods for cooperation between MSP and ESA processes. Wind farms development could be considered as a case study or an example and an output of the brainstorming could lead to identifying explicit links between MSP and ESA.

4.37 The Session suggested that that the event could be arranged in connection with Planners's Forum and to also engage with participants of the Planners' Forum.

4.38 The Session supported proposed structure of the first workshop emphasizing its brainstorming nature and pointed out that the second workshop could be more dedicated to specific sectors.

4.39 The Session invited Finland, Sweden and the HELCOM Secretariat to continue the planning of this event based on the information shared during this session. The Session also invited the HELCOM Secretariat to share this proposal to next session of EG ESA ([IC EG ESA 6-2024](#)) to be held on 30 September 2024.

4.40 The Session considered draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the report or guiding document on good practices for sectoral sustainable development (**document 4-5**) related to implementation of the workplan task 4.1. The Session acknowledged that outputs from both eMSP NBSR and MSP4BIO projects can be used to cover many topics as described in the document.

4.41 The Session discussed what would be the role of the group when compiling all relevant information as well as the format of this document. The Session proposed that since many reports already exist and are covering this topic, it would be relevant to create clear policy messages possibly in the form of policy briefs with the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG providing clear guidance to ensure the relevance of these policy briefs to support the work of the group.

4.42 The Session considered the first draft of the ToRs being a good basis and also noted the following topics shared by the participants to be added to the document:

- the EU MSP platform highlighted that social aspects should be included in the report;
- Sweden shared views that the document could include additional information on how nature has been included in the MSPs;
- Finland and Latvia proposed that the MSP-GREEN project could contribute on some topics and that social aspects would be covered by the project's input.

4.43 The Session recalled the joint workshop with EG ESA (cf. paras 4.36-4.39 of this Memo) which could also add valuable input for the document.

4.44 The Session recalled that this task 4.1 of the current and upcoming workplans should be implemented by 2026 and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to incorporate the comments shared and inputs proposed during the session and to submit a new draft to the next session of the group for further discussion.

[MSP for climate change mitigation, adaptation and increased resilience \(framework for addressing climate change in MSP\)](#)

4.45 The Session took note of the information on the planning on a joint workshop between EN CLIME and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (**document 4-6**) as invited by the IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024.

4.46 The Session took note of the preliminary outcomes of the event organized prior to this session, on 17 September 2024, by Latvia and MSP-GREEN on the topic of climate change mitigation and adaptation in MSP. The Session recalled the [presentation](#) on the climate work in the MSP-GREEN considered by [IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 3-2023](#) and how climate change aspects have been included in the project work.

4.47 The Session took note that the project has shared good national practices and prepared recommendations on taking climate change into account in MSP process both from mitigation and adaptation points of view. The Session invited Finland and Latvia to share the experiences and proposals on what and how to include from the MSP-GREEN project work in the joint workshop to be planned.

4.48 The Session initiated discussion on how the article "[Key components of sustainable climate-smart ocean planning](#)" can be utilized in the Baltic Sea region. The Session considered the 10 steps for climate-smart MSP, pointing out that for reducing greenhouse gas emissions space enabling renewable energy expansion has to be provided.

4.49 The Session took note of the information on views presented in the Barcelona workshop of the steps: that they are good but too broad and general and that more practical and specific steps should be developed, e.g. step 4 actually includes several steps. The Session further acknowledged the need to develop them more Baltic Sea specific.

4.50 The Session took note of the views that it might be challenging to prioritize ecosystem health first (step 1) because of variable national priorities, especially if a country has quite limited amount of sea space to plan in the first place and the political push for increasing the amount of offshore wind energy in the region.

4.51 The Session recalled that there is a chapter on climate smart MSP in the draft EBA guidelines to be further developed during the current revision process but that the climate matters should be considered more thoroughly. The Session further recalled that MSPglobal will produce the climate smart MSP complementary guidance by mid-2025 as indicated in the draft workplan and proposed the relevant stakeholders to be invited to plan the joint workshop to share findings and status of the guidance.

4.52 The Session shared information on accounting climate refugia in the Swedish MSP process with a study by the Swedish Geological Survey (SGS) modelling potential climate refugia in the Baltic Sea showing a decline in species distribution. The Session took note that the Swedish modelling done under the Pan Baltic Scope project could be revisited again with updated habitat maps prepared by SGS and the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI).

4.53 The Session took note that EN Clime has not considered the topic of climate refugia since the work in the past years was focused on HELCOM Climate-Change Fact Sheets (CCFS). The Session also took note that an update of the CCFS is underway.

4.54 The Session proposed to use the topics and steps in **document 4-6** with the comments presented during the session as a basis for further planning and invited the HELCOM Secretariat and the co-Chair of EN

Clime to continue the planning of the joint workshop, taking into account the timing of both EN Clime and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG spring sessions. The Session further invited the Contracting Parties to nominate members to join the organizing committee of the workshop to the HELCOM Secretariat (florent.nicolas@helcom.fi) by **3 October 2024**.

4.55 the Session took note of the methodological framework on assessing climate change impact on specific fishing stocks in the Baltic Sea, developed by MSP4BIO Project, to support producing the information document on MSP's role in adaptative conservation strategies under task 5.3 of both current and draft 2025-27 workplans (**document 4-7**).

4.56 The Session discussed the topic of the impact of offshore wind farms on the survival of fish species, for example on the information shared by Germany on the work done on this topic by the Thünen Institute. The Session took note of the information shared that survival of cods could increase in areas where offshore wind farms area operated since fishing activities are limited or inexistent.

4.57 The Session took note of information that this topic was raised and discussed during the [ICES Annual Science Conference 2024](#) held on 9-12 September 2024.

4.58 The Session invited the MSP4BIO project to consider the information shared to further work on the topic. The project was also invited to consider sharing information on this topic with the HELCOM Working Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (WG Fish) since the group could bring valuable input to the project's work.

Dialogue with sectors and platforms

4.59 The Session did not further discuss how relevant sectors and other processes can be engaged with the group, recalling that this topic is related to the task 4.1 of the workplan that was already covered with the discussion related to document 4-5.

Agenda Item 5

Information and data for MSP

Progress in the work of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group

5.1 The Session took note of the information shared by Kamil Rybka, new elected chair of the BSR MSP Data ESG, on the progress of the work of the group based on [IC BSR MSP Data ESG 5-2024](#) held online on 10 September 2024.

5.2 The Session considered the draft workplan 2025-2026 for the BSR MSP Data ESG (**document 5-1**). The Session recommended the draft workplan for approval, noting that a correspondence procedure including Russia will be launched for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to approve it.

5.3 The Session took note that several projects work on topics related to the regional MSP output data structure, especially ReMAP, which led to a proposal for significant revision of the structure and presented during IC BSR MSP Data ESG 5-2024. The Session pointed out that the update of the regional output data structure requires update of Basemaps service and, subsequently, the revision of the Guidelines on transboundary maritime spatial planning (MSP) output data structure.

5.4 The Session requested the ESG to scrutinize the Guideline and present proposal for the scope and timeline of the revision to the next session of the Working Group, for the WG to decide on the need to revise the document, agree on the revision methods and identify needed resources.

Last developments of the EU Technical Expert Group (TEG) on data for MSP

5.5 The Session took note of the information shared by the HELCOM Secretariat on the progress of the EU TEG on Data for MSP: During the European Maritime Spatial Planning week to be held in Marseille,

France, on 22-24 October 2024, a session on MSP data, innovation and harmonization withing MSP will be held on the first day. The topic on legal framework surrounding data reporting, uncovering how seamless data sharing can enhance MSP will be considered among several other topics. The Session also took note that beyond the planned session, there will also be a “data corner” gathering and sharing data related content.

5.6 The Session recalled that the EMODnet data portal is using data from Basemaps and pointed out that if changes to the output data under Basemaps are planned to be undertaken, changes in EMODnet might also have to be implemented. The Session took note that EMODnet is currently conducting a study including a survey with data providers to collect information on users’ experience of the updated portal structure.

Agenda Item 6 Coordination of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial planning, MSP related projects and initiatives

6.1 The Session took note that for this agenda item, the Session is acting as Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning (PA SP).

[Future of the Baltic Sea Interreg after 2027 – an interactive discussion](#)

6.2 The Steering Group took note of the information on the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme and an ongoing consultation for Interreg post-2027 presented by representatives of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (**presentation 11**).

6.3 The Steering Group discussed the need and potential for transnational cooperation and took note of views that EUSBSR works well with supporting projects for policy area coordinators and that should be preserved, and that project platforms are a good tool to consolidate project outcomes, present and boost knowledge transfers that can influence policies.

6.4 The Steering Group discussed the needs for transnational improvements for MSP and based on the Regional MSP Roadmap pointed out especially:

- climate change and blue economy related matters are topics that need both national and transnational consideration;
- spatial data harmonization work is important to be continued and to support the regional BSR Data ESG expert group;
- ecological challenges related to e.g. migrating birds and fish, marine mammals, seafloor integrity and underwater noise, on sea-basin level where linkages between MSPD and MSFD are lacking, and expanding offshore wind energy and expected changes in ecology because of the climate change;
- cumulative impact assessments in transnational context and their applicability at national level;
- regularly updated comprehensive picture of the sea basin level in line with national developments in MSP is highly important to ensure sea-basin approach and coherence between countries;
- cooperation of practitioners in MSP and exchange of experiences on practical aspects of planning process (e.g. allocation space for offshore wind, resolving user conflicts etc.) such as Planners’ Forums;
- collaboration with different sectors and stakeholders (interests), to have them onboard besides MSP experts to develop joint solutions;
- develop a regional framework for monitoring of MSP impacts and implementation aligning national monitoring programmes and thus enabling regional MSP coherence.

6.5 The Steering Group discussed the need for infrastructure projects and acknowledged that large scale marine infrastructure is usually not within the scope of Interreg projects.

6.6 The Steering Group discussed the major obstacles and challenges in transnational cooperation and pointed out that access to (spatial) data is both an opportunity and obstacle, as well as basic supporting systems related to technologies such as for hybrid meetings.

6.7 The Steering Group took note of the view by the European Commission that clear identification and formulation of funding programmes' objectives is of high importance for their successful implementation.

6.8 The Steering Group discussed facilitation needs which can be supported at transnational level and

- proposed that specific calls for increasing information sharing or supporting preparing of regional guidance documents would be needed as well as knowledge hub support;
- pointed out that collaboration with and reaching out to stakeholders in various sectors is a persisting challenge;
- acknowledged that macroregional strategies days organized by DG Regio together with DG MARE is a forum facilitating collaboration between the macroregions and sea basins;
- highlighted the need of supporting spatial planners at local level with transnational knowledge and experiences;
- pointed out that security and resilience related aspects in spatial planning are now of very high priority nationally in many countries but bringing that to transnational level is a challenge;
- took note of information that in some countries there is national coordination for EUSBSR policy areas and their needs.

6.9 The Steering Group took note of information that the EU funding programmes are steered to be results-oriented.

6.10 The Steering Group shared views on needed topics for future projects after 2027 and that they could include: fisheries, energy and MSP in one project; multi-level governance and cross-sectorial approach for sustainable region; a subregional project covering Bothnian Bay and various aspects including climate change impact; projects supporting concrete aspects of the revision of the regional strategies such as the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Regional MSP Roadmap.

[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](#)

6.11 The Steering Group took note of the 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 (**document 6-2**).

[Follow-up the implementation of PASPS project and the workplan for 2025-2026](#)

6.12 The Steering Group considered and approved the Policy Area Spatial Planning workplan 2025-2026 (**document 6-4**) that was originally submitted to the Steering Group for consideration in June 2024.

6.13 The Steering Group supported the prolongation of the PASPS project for 2025-2026 and the letter of support for PASPS project and delegated the Co-Chairs to sign the letter of support (**document 6-5** and **attachment 1**).

[MSP Planners' Forum and identification of project ideas](#)

6.14 The Steering Group took note of the results of the Planners' Forum (**document 6-3**). The Steering Group supported cumulative impact assessment as the topic for the next Planners' Forum. The Steering Group encouraged representatives of Sweden, Denmark and Lithuania to attend Planners Forum and share experiences on applied methods to assess cumulative impact assessment.

6.15 The Steering Group provided guidance for the content of the 6th Planners' Forum, proposing to take stakeholders and experiences in the North Sea region and OSPAR into account.

6.16 The Steering Group suggested to consider the accelerating planning processes in the light of transboundary consultations as discussed with document 3-9 at one of Planners' Forums.

[Overview of projects that contribute to the implementation of EUSBSR Action Plan, MSP Roadmap and HELCOM-VASAB workplan 2022-2024, VASAB Vision 2040](#)

6.17 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the PROTECT Baltic Project (**presentation 12**). The Steering Group took note of a question whether restoration action plan includes spatial actions and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to clarify the matter after the session. The Steering Group took note that the PROTECT Baltic project has been running for one year and will continue for four more years.

6.18 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the Baltic Sea2Land project with [the Navigator tool test site](#) ready and that informative workshops will be organized on how to use and update it. The Steering Group noted that the Navigator tool is for now a test version and the final version will be published later. The Steering Group took note that the tool will remain on the data products hosted by HELCOM which will ensure its functionality and updates after the end of the project with potential support of a project platform. The Steering Group emphasized the importance of INTERREG programme visibility in all projects' products.

6.19 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the MSP-GREEN project (**presentation 13**). The Steering Group welcomed the progress achieved, emphasizing the importance of project outputs for the development of regional MSP process and taking note that relevant products will be prepared for consideration in future meetings.

6.20 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the MSP4BIO project and the invitation to attend the MSP4BIO Science-policy Think Tank to be organized in connection to the European MSP Week on 24 October 2024 at 15.00 CET. The Steering group further took note of the analysis of cumulative pressures and impacts in HELCOM MPAs and major contributing individual pressures (**presentation 14**).

6.21 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the ReMAP project, supporting development of the HELCOM SPIA tool and MSP data related tools among several regional seas. The Steering Group further took note that ReMAP work will be presented during the European MSP Week in October e.g. in the data corner. The Steering Group highlighted the importance of the project outputs for the support of regional MSP process, and particularly the work of BSR MSP Data ESG.

6.22 The Steering Group took note of the latest developments of the PERMAGOV project wrapping up findings of the project and governance procedures identified by the project. The Session invited HELCOM Secretariat to circulate a project document on seabed integrity governance to provide an opportunity for the members of this group to reflect on it and guide the project's work. The document will be ready in mid-October and would be circulated by email for a commenting period of 3 weeks.

[Other information relevant to the Steering Group](#)

6.23 The Steering Group took note of the new Interreg call for project platforms. The Steering Group agreed that such projects aimed at increased policy impact of project outputs are highly relevant as support for the implementation of the Regional MSP Roadmap.

6.24 The Steering Group took note that there will be altogether 12-13 project platforms financed. The idea of these projects is to produce tangible policy relevant results. Selected projects will be closely followed by the European Commission and Member States and will mandatory involve at least one big event with involvement of DG Regio representatives.

6.25 The Steering Group emphasized that strengthening sustainability of the region through the development of regional SEA framework as a project platform idea is highly relevant for current policy priorities. The Steering Group also highlighted that this theme not only contributes to the Save the Sea objective of EUSBSR but also important for climate change priority as well as promotion of blue economy, particularly in relation to offshore energy. The Steering Group pointed out that the upcoming discussion at Planners' Forum will contribute to the development of the project proposal in relation to cumulative impact assessment in MSP as an inseparable part of SEA procedure.

6.26 The Steering Group took note of another project platform idea primarily related to climate change but with focus on land-based planning and coastal zone management. The Steering Group was of the view that project objective is of high policy relevance.

6.27 The Steering Group took note of the [EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024](#) to be held in Visby on 29-31 October 2024 and the plans of the PASPS project and VASAB and HELCOM Secretariats as Policy Area Coordinators to contribute to various sessions and workshops during the Forum as well as with stands in the Networking Village (**presentation 15**).

Agenda Item 7

Any other business

7.1 The Session considered the **document 7-1** about the marine Natura 2000 area Bogskär in the Åland archipelago submitted by CCB and the proposal that the topic would fall under the scope of the EBA guidelines. The Session took note of information that the Finnish Ministry of Environment considers the area to be biologically important and supported it to be designated as a MPA, and that Finland is now waiting for the ruling of the Finnish supreme court on the matter.

7.2 The Session pointed out that as the request is from an HELCOM Observer and not Finland it is difficult for the group to consider the matter and that the mandate of the group might be questionable also because there is an ongoing court case, and that Åland has its autonomous parliament. The Session further acknowledged the positions that the proposal is more related to national authorities responsible for MPA designation and not MSP authorities.

7.3 The Session took note of the views by Sweden and Finland that the request for further information of the scientific relevance and biological importance of the region from Sweden should be addressed to the relevant departments in SwAM.

7.4 The Session took note of the clarification by CCB that the proposed workshop could be organized after the court has solved the case, that the group is proposed to be moderating the workshop and that HELCOM is seen as a relevant forum for the matter as the only regional independent party where the topic could be considered.

7.5 The Session invited CCB and Finland to share further information and update on the situation of the matter in the next session of the group.

7.6 The Session thanked Joacim Johannesson, Sweden, who acted as a Co-Chair since his election in Riga in November 2016 and congratulated him for the high-quality work through the years.

7.7 The Session did not consider any other business.

Agenda Item 8**Future planning**

- 8.1 The Session did not consider the election of a new Co-Chair from HELCOM side due to the absence of nominations. The Session recommended coming back to the election of the new co-Chair at the next session of the WG.
- 8.2 The Session welcomed the proposal from Kai Trümppler, co-Chair of the group from the VASAB side to elect Kristine Kedo, Latvia, as the Vice co-Chair of the group from the VASAB side.
- 8.3 The Session elected Kristine Kedo, Latvia, as Vice co-Chair of the group from the VASAB side.
- 8.4 The Session welcomed the proposal from Germany to host the next session in Rostock from 7 to 9 April 2025.
- 8.5 The Session discussed tentative dates for the autumn 2025 session of the group and suggested to have the next session between 13 and 17 October 2025. The Session invited the HELCOM Secretariat to share a poll with the contacts of the Working Group. The Session invited the Contracting Parties to contact the HELCOM Secretariat if they wish to host the 2025 autumn session.

Agenda Item 9**Memo of the Session**

- 9.1 The Session approved the memo of the Session. The Memo together with the presentations considered by the Session were made available on the [session site](#) by the HELCOM Secretariat.

Annex 1

List of Participants

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