

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning on Maritime Spatial Planning 19 March 2024, Gothenburg Sweden

### (4-2024 SG EUSBSR PA SP on MSP)

The Steering Group (SG) was attended by representatives of Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The Steering Group was also attended by invited guests from the EU MSP Platform, the EUSBSR Baltic Sea Strategy Point, the EUSBSR PA Safe, the Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment, the MPA Europe project, MSP-GREEN, Baltic Sea2Land, eMSP, MSP4BIO, ReMAP and PROTECT Baltic projects.

The SG was chaired by Joacim Johannesson (Sweden). Coordinators of Policy Area Spatial Planning Egija Stapkēviča (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 fourth informal consultation Steering Group of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 4-2024), 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 took note of the information on activities related to the Policy Area (PA) "Spatial Planning" of the EUSBSR and organizational matters (document 3-1).
2. The Steering Group emphasized the importance of the process of the EUSBSR Action Plan update, and that this topic is to be thoroughly discussed during the next Steering Group session in autumn 2024.
3. The Steering Group took note of the information about a proposal of the joint cooperative workshop of PAs Nutri; Hazards and Spatial Planning at the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Visby on 30-31 October 2024 on strengthening cross-sectorial effort towards achieving regional strategic policy.

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

4. The Session took note of the information that the Terms of Reference and workplan (2023-2024) for the BSR MSP Data ESG have been approved via correspondence in January 2024 by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation (document 5-1). The documents are available on the HELCOM website on the [dedicated page](#) for the BSR MSP Data ESG.
5. The Session took note of the latest developments of the BSR MSP Data ESG in implementing the workplan for 2023-2024, based on the Memo of IC BSR MSP DATA ESG 4-2024 (document 5-2).
6. The Session welcomed the information shared by the HELCOM Secretariat on the work carried by the BSR MSP Data ESG and thanked all experts for the valuable work carried out by the group. This effort has been recognized at the European level making the Baltic Sea region

European frontrunner in the development of MSP data model, data harmonization in transboundary context as well as in the development of the data sharing system.

7. The Session took note that the post of Chair for the BSR MSP Data ESG is vacant and performed a tour-de-table on the national possibilities to nominate a Chair. The Session welcomed the nomination of Kamil Rybka, Poland, as candidate for the post Chair of the group for the next two years. The election will be performed during the next informal consultation session of the BSR MSP Data ESG.

8. The Session took note of the information that Finland and Germany will nominate new contacts to the BSR MSP Data ESG who are experts in GIS.

#### Planners' Forum

9. The Session took note of the information deriving from the 3rd Planners' Forum (document 6-4).

10. The Session took note of the information that the next Planners' Forum will be held online on 18 April 2024 with a main theme "multi-use and co-existence".

11. The Session took note that the VASAB Committee expressed interest in establishing the same type of event for terrestrial spatial planning.

12. The session recalled that IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 3-2023 took note of the information shared by the HELCOM Secretariat on the initiative of Belgian experts to attend the Planners' Forum and discuss issues related to an energy island. The topic is included in the agenda of the next Planners' Forum to be held online on 18 April 2024.

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

13. The Steering Group took note of the information on the eMSP NBSR project results and discussed how its various outputs contribute to the implementation of the Regional Baltic Sea MSP Roadmap 2030 (document 3-2 and presentation 1).

14. The Steering Group welcomed the outcomes of the eMSP NBSR project highlighting that the project effectively brought the North Sea and Baltic Sea MSP communities together. The Steering Group valued project results which are highly relevant to the regional policy and contribute to the implementation of the Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030, particularly in relation to the application of ecosystem-based approach, integrative ocean governance and sustainable blue economy. The Steering Group welcomed the plan to continue cooperation between the North and Baltic Seas, particularly, with the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI).

15. The Steering Group took note of the information on the project PROTECT BALTIC presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (presentation 2).

16. The Steering Group welcomed the project emphasizing its relevance to the implementation of the EU Green Deal policies such as Biodiversity Strategy and Restoration Law. The Steering Group took note of the clarifications that despite the project does not include a separate work package related to climate change, models applied in the project consider climate changes as one of the mandatory parameters.

17. The Steering Group further discussed that consideration of nature conservation goals, including expansion of protected areas without accounting of interests of other sea users striving for other policy goals might lead to recommendations which would not be practically applicable due to conflicting interests. The Steering Group recommended the project to take interests of other sea users into consideration and propose solutions resolving potential conflicts of interests.

18. The Steering Group took note that the project is striving to account for various sea

users' interests and resolve conflicts through an extensive dialogue between various stakeholders. The project will investigate existing legal framework to resolve such conflicts of interests and identify existing gaps which supposed to be bridged.

19. The Steering Group took note that MSP4BIO as sister project to PROTECT BALTIC is doing an analysis of policy coherence from MPAs to MSP perspective which might support the work of PROTECT BALTIC project and broaden the scope of its policy consideration. The Steering Group recalled that some MSP4BIO deliverables will be discussed under agenda item 4 of this session.

20. The Steering Group took note of the information on the project MPA Europe presented by the project's representatives (presentation 3). The Steering Group welcomed the information pointing out synergies with the regional MSP work in the Baltic Sea, particularly, biodiversity richness maps and blue carbon maps. The Steering Group recommended communicating these outputs with the BSR MSP Data ESG.

21. The Steering Group clarified that 5 climate change scenarios are considered in MPA Europe project, which are supposed to correspond to IPCC report though they are numbered differently in the presentation.

22. The Steering Group took note of the overview of projects and their contribution to the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 (document 3-3). The Steering Group welcomed the initiative by the HELCOM Secretariat, proposed updating eMSP NBSR contribution to task 3.1 and PROTECT BALTIC, Baltic Sea2Land and MPA Europe contribution to task 3.4 and recommended considering the possibility of including this task within the future work plan (2025-2026) of the Policy Area 'Spatial Planning'.

23. The Steering Group expressed the view that such work will provide added values for the implementation of the Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 follow-up (cf. implementation interim assessment). The Steering Group took note that project representatives are willing to contribute to the maintenance of the projects overview. The Steering Group also supported suggestions to improve the overview table, particularly, in relation to Baltic Sea2Land and eMSP NBSR project activities, and to add additional projects such as Oceanids and MPA Europe to the overview.

24. The Steering Group suggested that the overview could be presented during a meeting of the EU MSEG on MSP to highlight the relevance of such overview linking projects' activities and policy as well as for possible application in other sea regions.

25. The Steering Group took note of the information on the status of Baltic Sea2Land project orally presented by the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. The Steering Group took note of clarification that the Navigator tool which supposed to be developed by the project will be applicable to address governance challenges on land-sea interactions to enable sustainable blue economy in maritime/coastal planning areas.

26. The Steering Group took note of the information on the latest progress of the ReMAP project, orally presented by the HELCOM Secretariat.

#### [Follow up of MSP at the regional level based on the follow-up mechanism](#)

27. The Session took note of the information provided and invited the Secretariat to make available the new excel file on the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG workspace. The Session invited countries to contribute to the [living document](#) made available on the Working Group workspace prior to the next session of the Working Group (documents 6-2 and 6-3).

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

28. The Steering Group took note of the information on the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024

shared by the invited guest, Baltic Sea Strategy Point. The Annual forum will be held in Visby, Sweden, on 29-31 October 2024.

29. Recalling that PA Spatial Planning Steering Group meeting is an inseparable part of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG work, the Steering Group agreed to invite representatives of DG REGIO to the Steering Group to attend HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG as invited guests to the next sessions or meetings.

30. The Steering Group took note that the extension of PA Spatial Planning technical assistance (of Interreg BSR Programme) project (PASPS) for the years 2025-2026 will be considered by November 2024 based on a revised PA's workplan. The Steering Group agreed on the following procedure for the revision and approval of the PA's workplan:

- HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats prepare an evaluation of the current workplan implementation together with an initial proposal for the workplan 2025-2026 and circulate the document to the SG by 6 April 2024.
- SG members consider the proposed workplan and provide concrete recommendations on activities to be prioritized in 2025-2026 to the Secretariats ([dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi](mailto:dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi); [egija.stapkevica@vasab.org](mailto:egija.stapkevica@vasab.org)) by 15 May 2024.
- HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats circulate an updated draft of the workplan, incorporating provided recommendations to the SG by 1 September 2024 for tacit approval.
- SG members consider the draft workplan and tacitly approve it by 15 September 2024.

31. The Steering Group took note that the PACs can be approached by project applicants seeking a letter of support for submission to Interreg South Baltic Programme. Since there was not any guidance to PACs regarding the evaluation criteria and procedures for issuing these letters of support provided, the SG agreed on the following procedure:

- Letters of support can be issued by the PACs after approval by the Steering Group.
- The major evaluation criterium is based on the relevance to the regional and the EU policies and the Baltic Sea Regional MSP Roadmap particularly.
- In order to evaluate project relevance a simplified project description is to be submitted to PACs by project applicants seeking the support letter.
- Based on this description, the PACs will draft the support letter and circulate it to the SG for tacit approval in one week time together with the simplified project description.
- The letter cannot be issued if at least one Steering Group member objects. The support letter should reflect specific views of the Steering Group members, if any.

32. The Steering Group requested the PACs to draft a simple project description template demonstrating its policy relevance and submit it to the Steering Group for consideration and approval by 6 April 2024. The Steering Group will consider and reflect on the proposal by 1 May 2024. In case no changes are requested, the template will be considered approved.

33. The Steering Group agreed to consider and tacitly approve draft letters of support prepared by the PACs in a week's time.

34. The next Session will be held from 18 to 20 September 2024 in Riga as a part of IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 5-2024.