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Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

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Background

The HELCOM Secretariat is part of the consortium for the project eMSP NBSR - Emerging ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning topics in North and Baltic Seas Region, among 11 other partners from both the North Sea and Baltic Sea Regions. It is led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy of The Netherlands. The project implementation will begin in the autumn 2021 for a total duration of 30 months and is funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

As the Member States of the European Union should have their Maritime Spatial Plans ready since March 2021, MSP in Europe will enter a new stage. This new period is a unique opportunity to assess what has been achieved so far in the respective countries and sea basins, and what needs to be done to ensure MSP fulfils its potential. It is also a unique opportunity to share the lessons learnt, to expand and align the available information and knowledge base, and to use the newly gained knowledge and experience to jointly tackle the challenges ahead. The MSP NBSR project is designed to address the urgent need for learning of maritime authorities and inter-ministerial bodies to incorporate all these requirements into their MSPs. A Community of Practice (CoP) will be at the heart of the project and will facilitate continuous learning as a long-term way to “future proof” MSP.

This document presents the tasks planned within EMSP NBSR with HELCOM involvement and linked with the State & Conservation Group.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of information.

eMSP NBSR - Emerging ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning topics in North and Baltic Seas Region

Structure of the project

The aim of the eMSP project for the North Sea and the Baltic Sea regions is to enable the Maritime Spatial Planners of managing authorities and policymakers to reflect on current practice, to learn effectively from each other, to collectively identify problems and solutions, and to collectively provide feedback to national governments and the European Commission on implementation, development and research actions, and managerial approaches that can or should be taken to deal with future challenges and opportunities afforded by the sea in a coherent way and with involvement of industry, academia and non-governmental organisations.

The project is designed in 5 Work packages (WP):

- **WP 1:** Project Management.
- **WP 2:** Inception phase. The first 6 months of the project will be dedicated to set up the frame for the content-oriented work of the project, especially for the Work Package 3.
- **WP 3:** Maritime Community of Practice. This WP is a Community of Practice (CoP) that will facilitate continuous learning as a long-term way to “future proof” MSP. The CoP will tackle the 5 following topics, called learning strands:
 1. Ocean governance;
 2. Ecosystem-based approach;
 3. Sustainable blue economy;
 4. Monitoring and evaluation;
 5. Data sharing, information and communication technology serving MSP.
- **WP 4:** Science-Policy Interface and Policy and Governance Implications. This WP provides multi-dimensional learning and linkages to promote the cohesion of the eMSP learning process. As it facilitates overall learning and synthesis it relates to all project objectives. WP 4 lifts the overall purpose of capacity building for MSP through the project to a higher level, including a meta-level and a beyond the project level.
- **WP 5:** Project Communication.

HELCOM Secretariat involvement in eMSP NBSR

The Secretariat will contribute to all the Work Packages and learning strands.

In particular, the secretariat together with the Swedish Agency for marine and water management (SwAM) are co-leading the learning strand on Ecosystem-based Approach (EBA).

Based on the EU MSP Directive the EU member states have applied an ecosystem-based approach in developing the maritime spatial plans. At sea basin level methods and guidance have been developed to support the application, for example through MSP-principles and EBA guidelines by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and through projects such a Baltic SCOPE (2015-2017) and Pan Baltic Scope (2018-2019).

The aim of this learning strand is to further strengthen and harmonize EBA in MSP by sharing and building on this experience and by analyzing the EBA in our national planning processes and in our maritime spatial plans. The project could contribute, for example, to the update of the [HELCOM-VASAB MSP EBA guidelines](#), approved by HELCOM HOD 50-2016 and VASAB CSPD/BSR 72nd Meeting.

The HELCOM Secretariat is also strongly involved in the leaning strand on Data sharing, information and communication technology serving MSP. This leaning strand will be mainly focused on making available the maritime spatial plans via data portal. The HELCOM Secretariat will contribute with the experience learnt from the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-Group and the work achieved and planned on [BASEMAPS](#).

The inception phase (i.e. WP 2) is a crucial step for this project as it will draw the lines and aims of the WP the learning strands.