

HELCOM BLUES and beyond – the big picture

17th January 2023



BLUES



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Ultimate objective of the project:

- support **regional capacity, coordination and cooperation** with regards to developing effective measures to secure good status of the marine environment. This **includes provisioning, and making available, necessary knowledge** to advance the development and implementation of joint measures, as well as to **provide concrete support to the decision-making process** within the Baltic Sea region.



Good status of the marine environment, many instruments, same goal.

HELCOM

- Convention
- Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)
- Recommendations

EU

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)
- Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- Habitats and Birds Directives (HBD)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy



BLUES, supporting regional cooperation and coordination

How the BLUES project has furthered regional cooperation and coordination the Baltic Sea

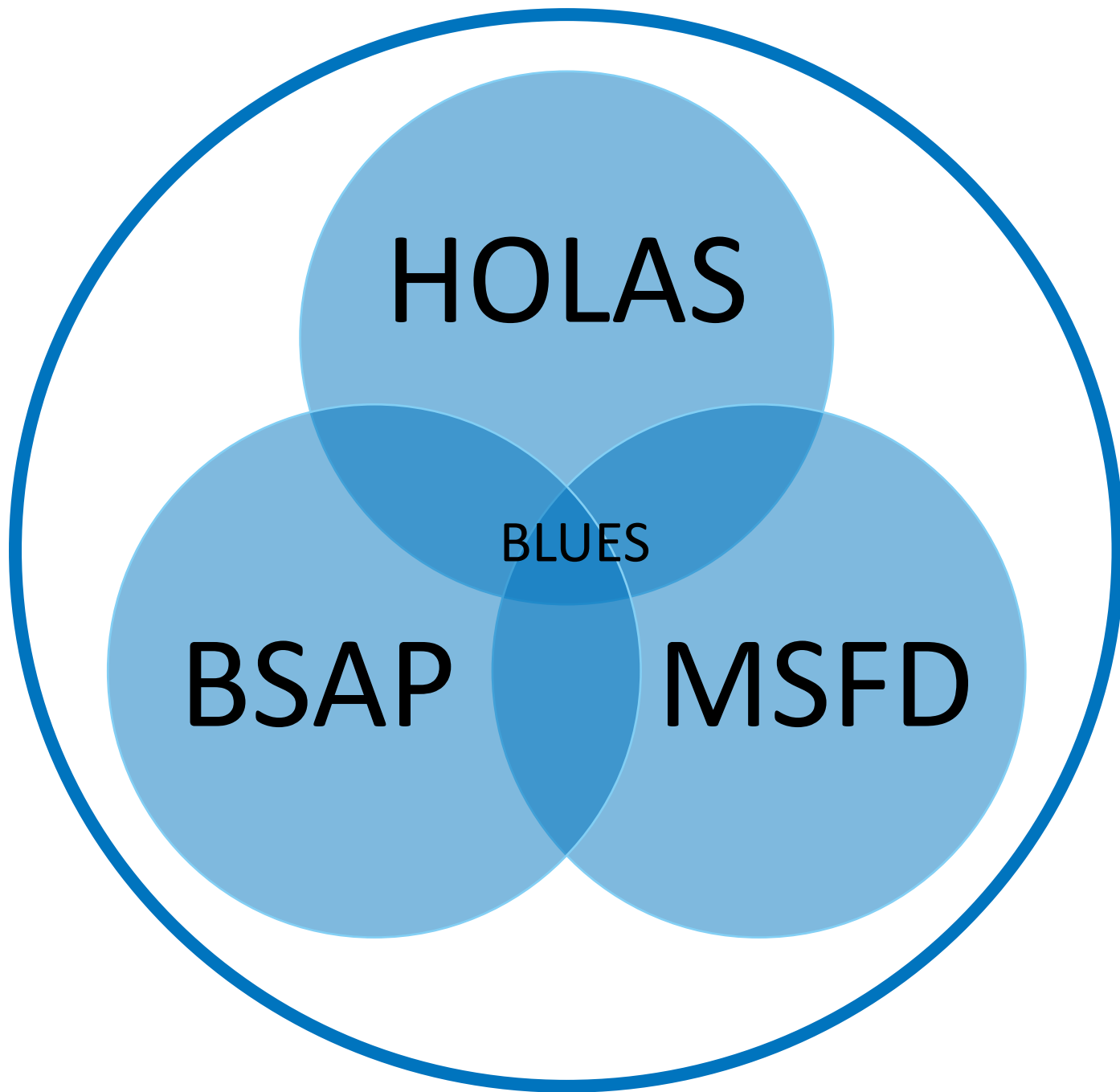


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Good state of the marine environment



BLUES as a platform for coordinating development



BLUES as an instrument for regional cooperation

- Benefitting from the expertise of others;
- Sharing of knowledge and information;
- Sharing of resources lowers overall resource demand;
- Improved effectiveness due to regional coherence and mutually enforcing and/or synergistic actions;
- Information is provided at the ecologically relevant scale, i.e. the scale at which the environment functions.



BLUES and regional coordination

- Steer/guidance by HELCOM groups:
 - ensures that the products and deliverables from the project are policy relevant and fit within the larger framework in which the work takes place.
 - Ensures that information on what is being done in the project reaches a broad audience, from technical experts to ministers across the whole region.
 - Functions as a way for partners to get input and support from a wide range of experts, including expertise not available in the consortium.
- Approval by HELCOM groups:
 - As the project work is directly relevant for national reporting under the MSFD (through HOLAS 3), the methods etc. need to be agreed at a regional level by all relevant countries.
 - Approval ensures uptake of products and deliverables are taken onboard in HELCOMs/Contracting Parties work and used long term.



BLUES and regional coordination

• HELCOM Working Groups

- HELCOM Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR)
- HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group (STATE&CONSERVATION WG)
- HELCOM Working Group on reduction of Pressures from the Baltic sea Catchment area (PRESSURE)
- HELCOM Maritime Working Group (WG MARITIME)
- HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based sustainable fisheries (FISH WG)

• HELCOM Expert Groups

- Expert Group on Economic and Social Analysis (EG ESA),
- Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA)
- Expert Group on Marine Litter (EG Marine Litter)
- Expert Group on Underwater Noise (EG Noise)
- Correspondence Group on Fisheries data (CG FISHDATA)
- Joint Working Group on Birds (JWG BIRD)
- Fish Pro III
- Expert Group on Phytoplankton (EG PHYTO)
- Expert Group on Zooplankton (EG ZOO)
- Expert Group on Food Webs (EG FOODWEBS)



BLUES, increasing capacity



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Increasing capacity

- The project has enabled progressing expertise across all the topics included.
- allowed experts who are new to the regional work a possibility to get insight into how it functions and establish cooperation beyond the duration of the project.
- Provided leverage for establishing novell and long-term regional cooperative platforms, e.g. EG ZOO, EG FOODWEB and strengthening the work on indicators under EG PHYTO.
- Improved dataflows and data availability.



BLUES provisioning, and making available, necessary knowledge: HOLAS 3

How the BLUES project has provided concrete input to the third Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea



HOLAS 3

- HOLAS is done every 6 years and results in the [State of the Baltic Sea report](#).
- The current assessment will be the third holistic assessment and runs 2022-2023, covering the assessment period 2016-2021.



BLUES and HOLAS 3

- Economic and social analyses
 - Ecosystem service valuation included for the first time in HOLAS 3.
 - Cost-benefit analyses included for the first time in HOLAS 3.
 - Cost of degradation analysis implemented and included in HOLAS 3.
 - Use of marine waters analysis implemented and included in HOLAS 3.
- Bycatch assessment
 - Included for the first time in HOLAS 3, evaluation approved and used in HOLAS 3.
- Coastal fish assessment
 - New Size structure of coastal fish indicator methodology approved, indicator evaluation approved and used in HOLAS 3.
- Pelagic assessment
 - New assessment methodology for integrated assessment developed, approved and used in HOLAS 3.
 - Expanded spatial scope of the zooplankton indicator, approved and used in HOLAS 3.
 - Expanded spatial scope of the Seasonal succession of dominating phytoplankton groups indicator, approved and used in HOLAS 3.
- Harbour porpoise assessment
 - Harbour porpoise distribution included for the first time in HOLAS 3, evaluation approved and used in HOLAS 3.
 - Harbour porpoise abundance included for the first time in HOLAS 3, evaluation approved and used in HOLAS 3.
- Foodweb assessment
 - Included for the first time in HOLAS 3, methodology approved and assessment used in HOLAS 3.
- BEAT
 - Updated assessment methodology developed, approved and implemented in HOLAS 3 across biodiversity topics.
- Litter assessment
 - Beach litter evaluation implemented, approved and included in HOLAS 3.
 - Monitoring guidelines for microlitter in seabed regionally approved and included in the HELCOM monitoring manual.
 - Monitoring guidelines for microlitter in the watercolumn approved and included in the HELCOM monitoring manual.
- Noise assessment
 - Assessment of continuous underwater noise implemented.
 - Assessment of impulsive underwater noise implemented, approved and used in HOLAS 3.



BLUES provisioning, and making available, necessary knowledge: MSFD

How the BLUES project provides support for national reporting under the MSFD.



MSFD

- Work has been aligned with and provides concrete support to the national MSFD reporting of the HELCOM Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States.
- Timelines adjusted for accommodate for national MSFD processes.
- All indicator evaluation results and assessments done under BLUES are available for the Baltic Sea EU Member States to use for national reporting purposes, enabling reporting results at an ecologically appropriate level, where this extends beyond national borders.
- Where direct results are not used, e.g. additional national data is included or modifications are needed the methodology and tools are available for use, supporting coherence.



BLUES enhancing capacity: Baltic Sea Action Plan

How the BLUES project supports the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan



BSAP

- BLUES has provided the capacity to start implementation of several Baltic Sea Action Plan Actions including:
 - B33:** By 2024 develop a roadmap to fill gaps to enable a holistic assessment for all relevant ecosystem components and pressures and, by 2030 at the latest, develop and fully operationalise a set of indicators fulfilling HELCOM's needs, including the need to provide a regional platform for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).
- Foodwebs**
 - B34:** Develop core indicators, and threshold values to evaluate the status of food webs by 2026, where applicable, and implement a holistic assessment of food webs no later than 2030.
- Coastal fish**
 - B15:** Develop and coordinate monitoring and assessment methods, where ecologically relevant, for specified representative coastal fish species, populations and communities, by 2023. Based on these assessment methods, to regularly assess the state of the coastal fish community through selected coastal fish species and groups, including threatened species, by at latest 2023. Based on the results of the assessment, develop and implement management measures with the ambition to maintain or improve the status of coastal fish species, including migratory species by 2027
 - B35:** By 2024 operationalize a set of indicators for the assessment of fish population health, including size and age distribution, where applicable, and, by 2029, for any remaining relevant species.
- Marine litter**
 - HL32:** Agree on core indicators and harmonized monitoring methods to evaluate quantities, composition, distribution and sources (including riverine input), of marine litter, including microlitter, by 2022, where applicable and for the rest no later than 2026. Work should be done in close coordination with work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora, such as the Technical Group on marine litter under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Underwater noise**
 - S62:** Develop and implement threshold values and assessment methods for adverse effects of impulsive and ambient noise for marine life, in cooperation with OSPAR, the EU and other relevant expert groups, by 2023 at latest for marine mammals and by 2026 for other relevant species groups.
- Economic and Social Analyses**
 - HT15:** By 2023, integrate economic and social analyses in HELCOM work strands to support the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach and allow for assessment of the linkages between the marine environment and human wellbeing, including carrying out regionally coordinated economic and social analysis of the marine environment.
 - HT18:** By 2023, identify potential uses of ecosystem services assessment and valuation, further develop and apply regionally coordinated methods in support of analyses of ecosystem services and provide an initial demonstration of how they can be used in policy development.
 - HT19:** By 2028, apply the framework of ecosystem accounting to assess the contributions of marine ecosystems to economic activity (e.g. Gross domestic product (GDP)) using values that are compatible with the system of national accounts and comparable with other economic sectors.



BLUES: supporting the decision-making process

How the BLUES project work supports the decision-making process in the Baltic Sea



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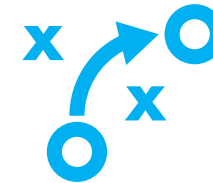


BLUES: supporting the decision-making process



Provides decision makers and authorities with:

- Information on the status of the environment, specifically pelagic habitats, foodweb, harbour porpoise and non-commercial fish.
- Informs on the distribution of pressures (underwater noise and marine litter).
- Information on human activities and their effects, society and economic aspect.
- Information on the spatial variation of status.
- Information trends in development over time.
- Follow up on the effect of measures.



Guides future decision making:

- Where do we have areas in poor state?
- What is causing the poor state?
- Where should we target our measures, what measures should we choose and what activities do we need to manage?



Conclusions



Conclusions

Projects such as BLUES

- Enable us to incorporate new findings and continuously improve how we perform assessments, making them increasingly more relevant and actionable.
- Allows countries to capitalize on the strengths of others and jointly develop methodology and directly usable endproducts.
- Significantly progresses our understanding of the marine environment, and our relationship with it.

Thank you!!



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Why do we need to

- So we have now gotten insight into the projects deliverables and how the project has achieved its objectives. But as you stated at the beginning of the presentation, the ultimate aim of the project work is to help ensure development of effective measures and to secure good status. This might sound like buzzwords. Why is good status of the environment important and why are measures key?
- How does indicator evaluations and assessing status, which BLUES has supported, actually help us with this? What is the value of making such evaluations and assessments?
- What comes next?



What is the HOLAS process?

- **You can't fix something if you don't know it is broken.**
- HOLAS works to identify the trends and the current state of the Baltic Sea environment.
- **You can't fix something if you don't know why it is broken.**
- HOLAS also works to identify which pressures are affecting the environment, to what degree, and what human activities are causing those pressures.
- **You can't fix something unless you know where it is broken.**
- HOLAS works to identify where pressures, activities and the values they are affecting are distributed spatially



What is the link between HOLAS and measures?

- **And lastly, you can't fix something unless you understand how to put it back together, and stop it from breaking again.**
- When we know the state of the environment, and we know what pressures have caused deterioration and what activities causes the pressures we need to understand what to do about it, and and what we do about it is refered to as measures.