



Harbour porpoise in the Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan

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ASCOBANS AC 26

Online 8-11.11.2021

<https://helcom.fi/media/publications/Baltic-Sea-Action-Plan-2021-update.pdf>



Vision



a healthy Baltic Sea environment with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in a good ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable economic and social activities.

Goal



Baltic Sea **ecosystem** is healthy and resilient

Goals



Baltic Sea unaffected by **hazardous substances and litter**



Environmentally sustainable **sea-based activities**



Baltic Sea unaffected by **eutrophication**

Horizontal topics

Climate change; monitoring; maritime spatial planning; economic and social analysis; financing; hot spots; knowledge exchange and awareness raising

HELCOM

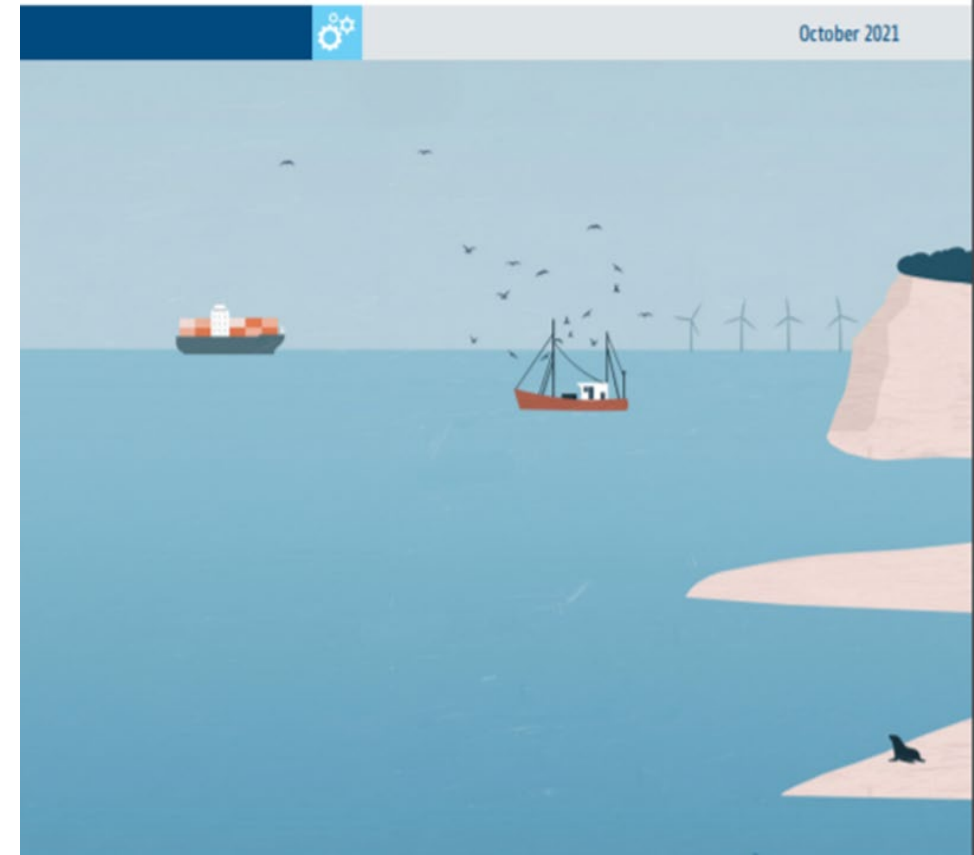


Baltic Sea Action Plan

2021 update

Baltic Marine Environment
Protection Commission

October 2021



Biodiversity, with its goal of a “Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient”,

Eutrophication, with its goal of a “Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”

Hazardous substances and litter, with its goal of a “Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter”, and

Sea-based activities, with its goal of “Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities”.



Biodiversity



Biodiversity
goal

*“Baltic Sea ecosystem is
healthy and resilient”*



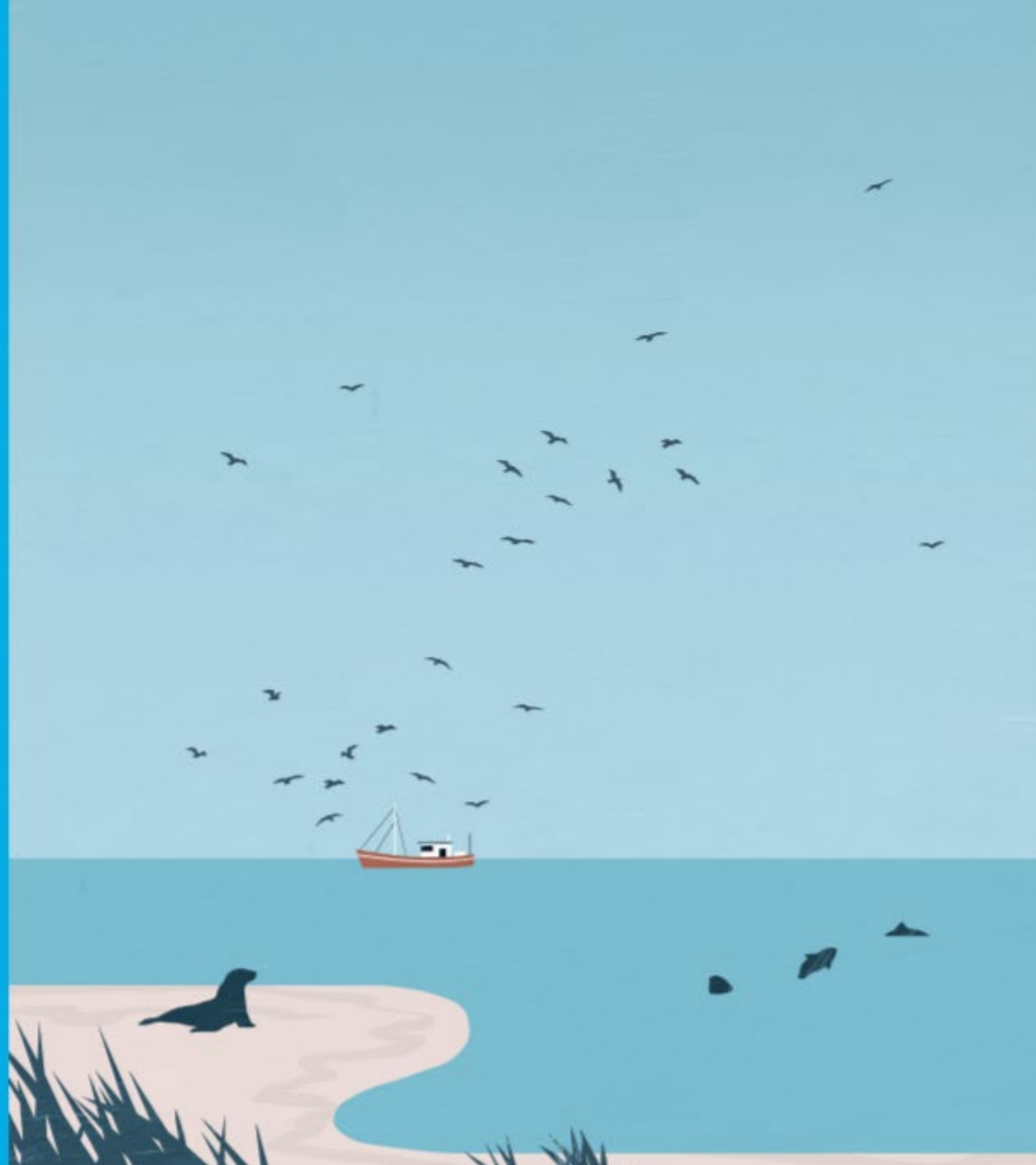
Ecological
objectives

- Viable populations of all native species
- Natural distribution, occurrence and quality of habitats and associated communities
- Functional, healthy and resilient food webs



Management
objectives

- Effectively managed and ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas
- Minimize disturbance of species, their habitats and migration routes from human activities
- Human induced mortality, including hunting, fishing, and incidental bycatch, does not threaten the viability of marine life
- Effective and coordinated conservation plans and measures for threatened species, habitats, biotopes, and biotope complexes
- Reduce or prevent human pressures that lead to imbalance in the foodweb



B8

- By 2022 at the latest, specify knowledge gaps on all threats to the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise population, and by 2023 for the western Baltic population, including by-catch and areas of high by-catch risk, underwater noise, contaminants and prey depletion. Knowledge gaps related to areas of high by-catch risk are to be addressed and by 2028 at the latest additional areas of high by-catch risk for both Baltic Sea populations are to be determined.
- To strengthen Baltic harbour porpoise population, by 2025 identify possible mitigation measures for threats other than by-catch and implement such measures as they become available.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments S43 S44 S45 S46 S47

S48



Ympäristöministeriö
Miljöministeriet
Ministry of the Environment

B10

- Include information on functional and life history traits for the species in the HELCOM Biodiversity Database, by 2024





Sea-based activities



Sea-based activities goal

“Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities”



Ecological objectives

- No or minimal disturbance to biodiversity and the ecosystem
- Activities affecting seabed habitats do not threaten the viability of species' populations and communities
- No or minimal harm to marine life from man-made noise



Management objectives

- Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats
- Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect marine life
- No introductions of non-indigenous species
- Minimize the input of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter from sea-based activities
- Enforce international regulations - no illegal discharges
- Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution
- Effective emergency and response capabilities
- Minimize harmful air emissions
- Zero discharges from offshore platforms
- Ensure sustainable use of the marine resources



Topic: By-catch



S43

- Reduce the negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem and to this end, support the development of fisheries management including technical measures to minimize unwanted by-catch of fish, birds and marine mammals and achieve the close to zero target for by-catch rates of relevant species by 2024, especially the Baltic proper population of harbour porpoise by 2022.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B8



S44

- Invite the competent authorities to immediately, but no later than 2022, implement mitigation measures in the Baltic proper, in order for by-catch of harbour porpoise to be significantly reduced with the aim to reach by-catch rates close to zero.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B8



S45

- Invite the competent authorities to implement operational conservation measures for the Belt Sea population of harbour porpoise by 2024 such as permanent and/or spatial-temporal closures for relevant fishing métiers in risk areas where technical mitigation measures are insufficient to reach conservation goals.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B8



S46

- Promote effective mitigation measures to minimize by-catch of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea area inter alia via cooperation with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH), and evaluate and promote adjusted measures as needed by 2025.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B8



S47

- Continually test, promote and introduce new technical and operational by-catch mitigation measures such as alternative and seal safe gears in cooperation with competent authorities with the aim to, as appropriate, replace fishing gear proven to be problematic with respect to by-catch, with evaluation of measures every five years starting in 2023, and regularly update the HELCOM questionnaire on trials of alternative fishing gears and fishing techniques.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B3 B5 B8



S48

- Develop and implement an effective data collection for more reliable data on incidental by-caught birds and mammals and fishing effort consistent and fully in line with the data needs identified by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Relevant sources of data are e.g. EU basic control Regulation and additional national or regional coordinated data collection programmes or projects for filling data-gaps outlined in the HELCOM Roadmap on fisheries data.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B5 B8



Theme: Underwater noise



S55 and S56

S55

- Identify at the latest by 2025, as well as regularly update every two years, mitigation measures according to Best Environmental Practice and Best Available Technique for continuous underwater noise in the Baltic Sea and implement thereafter in line with recommendations and regulations of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

S56

- Actively support and contribute to the ongoing discussions on underwater noise at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) by, amongst other things, working towards regionally coordinated implementation of actions by 2028.



S 57

- Start working as soon as possible towards regionally coordinated actions on underwater noise, aiming in the long term **towards addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise**, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities by:
 - a. Supporting a swift implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise.
 - b. Initiating and supporting pilot projects to study efficacy of vessel slow down, rerouting and other operational measures, on noise emissions and responses of target species by the end of 2026. Results are to be communicated to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for follow-up and further action.
 - c. By 2027 Mapping the contribution of recreational craft to the noise in the marine environment; supporting studies on efficiency of mitigation measures, such as speed limitations and time-area restrictions; and studies on impact from echo sounders and fish-finders. Based on available evidence and new results, developing guidelines for implementing regulation to reduce impact on sensitive species. Simultaneously, establishing a discussion with the industry and relevant international standardization bodies and aiming at developing industry or/and application standards for underwater noise emissions of engines with respect to recreational craft, echo-sounders and fish finders, which can be utilized in national regulation of activities in marine protected areas (MPAs) and other noise sensitive areas in the Baltic Sea.
- Cross-reference to actions in other segments B3



S58 and S59

S58

- Study by 2026 the impacts of continuous underwater noise from the installation, operation and decommissioning of offshore **windfarms on marine biota**, including cumulative effects of multiple windfarms. Based on the results, take relevant action, if necessary, in developing appropriate mitigation measures for the continuous underwater noise generated by offshore wind farms by 2029.

S59

- Reduce the impact of impulsive underwater noise on marine biodiversity.



S60 and S61

S60

- Identify at the latest by 2023, as well as regularly update every two years, mitigation measures according to Best Environmental Practice and Best Available Technique for impulsive underwater noise in the Baltic Sea and implement thereafter without delay.

S61

- Develop and implement guidelines for the design and use of acoustic deterrent devices to avoid detrimental impacts on the environment from underwater noise by 2024.



S62 and S63

S62

- Develop and implement threshold values and assessment methods for adverse effect 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.

S63

- Implement regular and regional harmonized monitoring of ambient and impulsive noise by 2023 to follow up effects of mitigation measures



Thank you!

