

International ocean governance –

# Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI)

## Global Dialogue

with Regional Seas Organizations & Regional Fishery Bodies

Brussels, Belgium, 20 March 2024

Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM)



# The Baltic Sea



Unique but young and fragile ecosystem



Catchment area:  
4x area of the sea



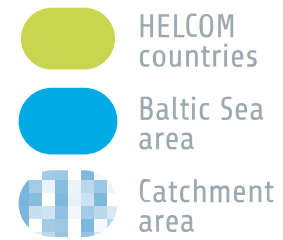
Population (catchment):  
85 million



Busy waterway: +/- 1,500 larger vessels sailing at any given time



Multitude of pressures affecting the Baltic



# HELCOM structure

The Contracting Parties signed the first Helsinki Convention in 1974 and updated it in 1992. The current Convention entered into force in 2000.



### The 10 Contracting Parties (CPs)

 DK	 EE	 EU	 FI	 DE
 LV	 LT	 PL	 RU	 SE



Each Contracting Party designates its own Head of Delegation as well as members of the Working Groups and of the Expert Groups and Networks



### Helsinki Convention

The set of guiding principles and obligations signed by the Contracting Parties on the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea



### HELCOM Secretariat

Coordinates the work and meetings of the Helsinki Commission and ensures CPs meet their obligations under the Helsinki Convention



### Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)

HELCOM chairmanship rotates every two years between the Contracting Parties (CPs)

-  **Heads of Delegation**  
Permanently represent the CPs and are decision-makers
-  **HELCOM Working Groups**  
Develop recommendations, policies & strategies
-  **Expert Groups & Networks**  
Provide scientific and technical underpinnings



### Decision making in HELCOM



The highest decision-making body in HELCOM is the Ministerial Meeting (the meeting of the HELCOM line ministers of each CP) that takes place every three years.



The Helsinki Commission meets annually (except when a Ministerial Meeting takes place) and is also entitled to make decisions. Its participants are designated by the CPs.



The Heads of Delegation meet twice per year and are also authorised to make decisions on behalf of the CPs.



# State of the Baltic Sea 2023

Third HELCOM holistic assessment 2016-2021

HELCOM carries out **holistic assessments** every six years to follow up on how well the measures are functioning.

The **third HELCOM holistic assessment** (HOLAS 3) focuses on the years 2016-2021.

The **State of the Baltic Sea** (2023) is a synthesis report based on a wide range of assessment products produced within HOLAS 3.



# HOLAS provides decision-makers and authorities with...



Information on  
the status of the  
Baltic Sea  
environment



Information on  
the spatial  
variation of  
status



Information  
trends in  
development  
over time



Informs on the  
distribution of  
pressures and  
human activities



Follow up on  
the effect of  
our measures



Data for EU  
MSFD reporting



# Little improvement in the state of the Baltic Sea



The Baltic Sea is under increasing impacts from **climate change** and **biodiversity degradation** catalysed by eutrophication, pollution, land use and resource extraction.



**Little to no improvement** of the Baltic Sea environment occurred during the assessment period (2016-2021).



**Measures** to reduce pressures on the Baltic Sea **are working**, when they are implemented, and the agreements in the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan remain highly relevant.



The effects of **climate change** are expected to increase in the future, increasing the need for measures to enhance ecosystem resilience and mitigate their negative impacts.



**Transformative changes** are needed in all socioeconomic sectors interacting with or affecting the Baltic Sea environment. **Actions are needed** both to stop current negative trends and to protect and restore ecosystems.




**Ecosystem knowledge** and **policies** for the Baltic Sea environment have developed substantially within the past six years.


# 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan: Structure & goals






## 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*





# Biodiversity:

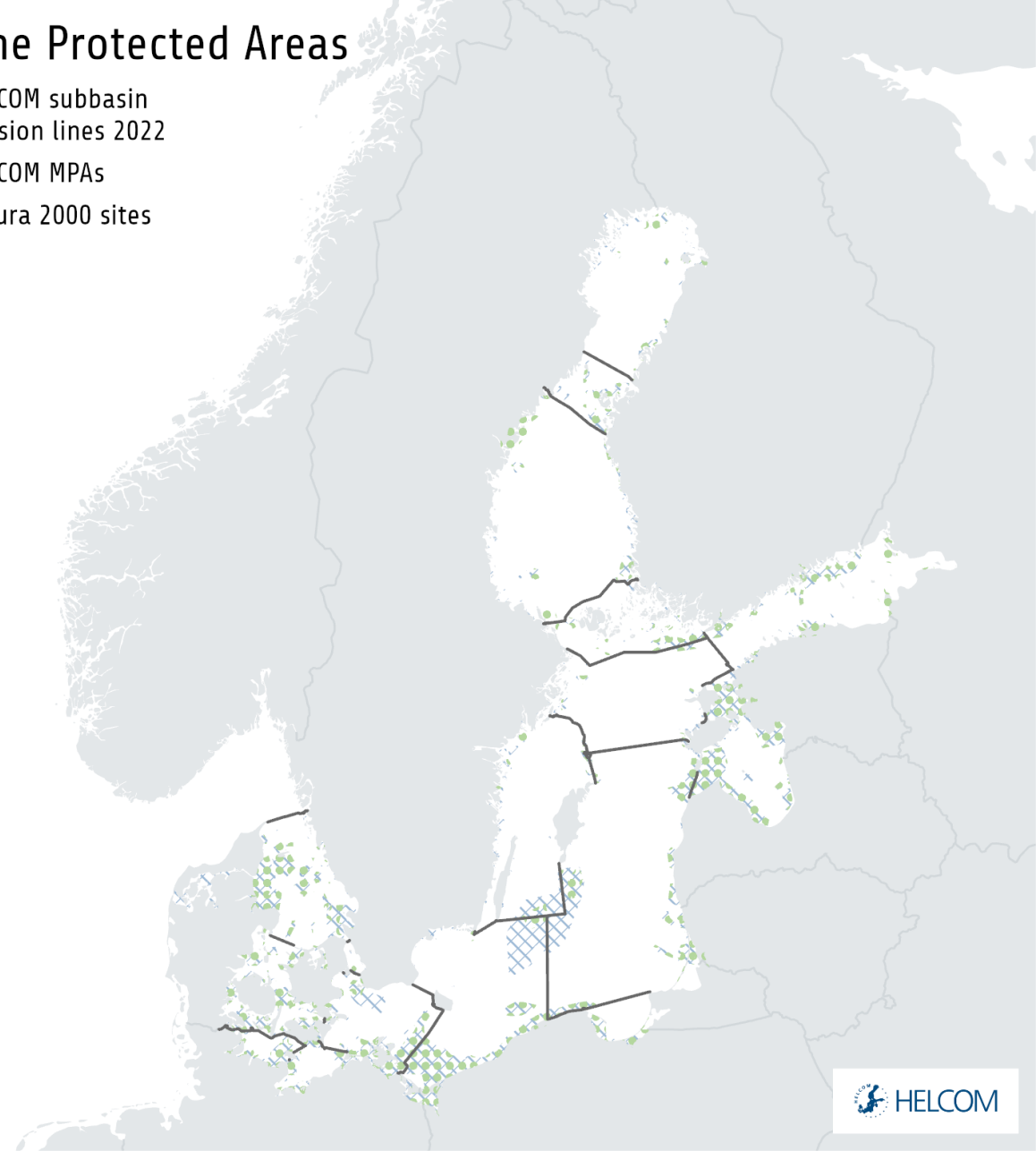
## HELCOM MPA Network & work on OECMs

### BSAP has 35 Actions under Biodiversity

- Four themes: Spatial conservation methods, Conservation of species, Conservation of habitats and biotopes, Enabling ecosystem-based management
- As of December 2022, the Baltic MPA network covers approximately 16.5% of the Baltic Sea
- Included in this are 178 HELCOM MPAs, amounting to about 13.2% of the Baltic Sea.
- Advancing the 30x30 target (BSAP Action B1, B2)
- Advancing OECMs: e.g. developing criteria (BSAP Action B2)

### Marine Protected Areas

- HELCOM subbasin division lines 2022
- HELCOM MPAs
- ⊠⊠⊠⊠ Natura 2000 sites





# Recent progress: fisheries

- Under the Sea-based activities segment, BSAP has 16 Actions on fisheries management, by-catch and fish-stock management
- Several new HELCOM indicators on fisheries were released in May 2023
- Aquaculture
  - new BAT/BEP on sustainable aquaculture (Dec 2023)
  - Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture is being updated
  - This month: new Expert Group of Aquaculture (former Correspondence Group)
- Work on migratory fish:
  - specifically salmon, eel, sturgeon and seatrout
  - Draft Recommendation targeting sturgeon migration currently being finalised for approval,
  - Updating the Recommendations for salmon and seatrout
  - Preparing a pan-Baltic project on eel



# Continual cooperation & ocean-related activities

- Continual exchange and/or cooperation with other global and regional frameworks and processes (EU, RSCs, UNECE, IUCN, post-2020 GBF, and others)
- Side Event at the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC), Lisbon, Portugal, in July 2022, organized by the Baltic Sea countries, OSPAR, IUCN WCPA, CCB & IASS
  - Six voluntary commitments submitted at the UNOC
- Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, 10-12 April 2024
  - Satellite event with OSPAR and other RSCs
- Our Oceans conference in Athens, Greece, 16-17 April 2024



Proud past,  
promising future

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HELSINKI CONVENTION  
1974 - 2024

Thank you for your  
attention!

