



HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 37/2

Adopted 10 March 2016,
having regard to Article 20, Paragraph 1 b)
of the Helsinki Convention

CONSERVATION OF BALTIC SEA SPECIES CATEGORIZED AS THREATENED ACCORDING TO THE 2013 HELCOM RED LIST

THE COMMISSION,

RECALLING Article 15 of the 1992 Helsinki Convention requiring the Contracting Parties to take all appropriate measures to conserve and protect biodiversity of marine and coastal areas,

BEING DEEPLY CONCERNED about the alarming situation of Baltic Sea species being in danger of becoming extinct, i.e. those categorized as “critically endangered”, “endangered” or “vulnerable” according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List and termed “HELCOM threatened species” hereafter,

RECALLING HELCOM Recommendations aiming at the protection and conservation of specific (groups of) Baltic Sea species, in particular Recommendations 17/2, 27-28/2, 34E-1, 19/2 and 32-33/1,

HAVING REGARD to the complementary HELCOM Recommendation 21/4 on the Protection of heavily endangered or immediately threatened marine and coastal biotopes in the Baltic Sea area,

RECALLING ALSO the commitment of the 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to improve the conservation status of threatened and/or declining species of the Baltic Sea area by 2015 (including specific agreements regarding fish and lamprey species), and the goal to achieve a favourable conservation status of all species by 2021,

RECALLING FURTHER the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration stating that species included in the 2013 HELCOM Red List (BSEP No. 140) are priorities for protection and should receive specific protection through an ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas, and that conservation plans for species at risk of extinction should be established,

RECALLING FURTHERMORE the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets, specifically Aichi Target 12 to prevent extinction of threatened species and improve and sustain their conservation status, and Aichi Target 6 to put in place recovery plans and measures for depleted species and that fisheries shall have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species, both to be met by 2020,

BEING AWARE that those Contracting Parties being also EU Member States, have to coordinate their activities regarding threatened species with the implementation of relevant EU Directives, such as the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and the Common Fisheries Policy as relevant,

HIGHLIGHTING that HELCOM threatened species can be associated, *inter alia*, with “biological features” according to Annex III Table 1 of the MSFD and thus, their protection and conservation contributes to the MSFD objective of achieving Good Environmental Status of EU marine waters by 2020,

RECALLING the ecosystem approach to fisheries management as required by the Common Fisheries Policy and the 2003 HELCOM/OSPAR Statement on the Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Human Activities and the Baltic Sea Action Plan,

ACKNOWLEDGING the important contributions of other regional fora and cooperation frameworks to the conservation of HELCOM threatened species, *inter alia*, under the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS), the implementation of which this Recommendation will support,

RECOGNISING that the 2013 HELCOM Red List includes a number of species which are naturally rare in the HELCOM area,

AIMING at specific protection and conservation measures for HELCOM threatened species, and when scientifically meaningful, reintroduction programmes for “regionally extinct” species,

RECOMMENDS that the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention take necessary measures to improve the status of HELCOM threatened species according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List and reduce the number of red listed species, herewith also working towards the goal to achieve a favourable conservation status of all species by 2021, and to carry out the following steps:

1. Make an inventory of existing and planned national and regional conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans as well as other relevant programmes and measures for the protection of species which are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List including measures through habitat protection - and review by 2018 their effectiveness and, if necessary, define future protection needs, and based on these:
 - 1.1. Determine which additional activities are needed to mitigate the identified pressures and/or impacts and support the development or amendment of conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans for HELCOM threatened species. Where appropriate, the development could be carried out in cooperation with neighbouring countries or relevant organizations,
 - 1.2. Aim to implement such plans as soon as possible, and by 2021 at the latest.
2. Consider the possibility to introduce and/or update national legislation or, if more appropriate, choose different kinds of instruments (such as incentives, administrative actions or negotiated agreements), to provide for effective protection of relevant HELCOM threatened species in all their life stages in the Baltic Sea sub-regions where they are threatened.
3. Consider including HELCOM list of threatened species in EIA procedures in order to mitigate or limit pressures or impacts inflicted on threatened species with the aim to:
 - 3.1. Receive and share knowledge about the occurrence of such species,
 - 3.2. Get a documentation of the human induced pressures and/or impacts,
 - 3.3. Be in a position to decide on appropriate measures to avoid or limit and mitigate the relevant pressures and/or impacts,
 - 3.4. Receive reliable data for the restriction or prohibition of activities which may significantly affect, destroy or damage populations or habitats of HELCOM threatened species.
4. Consider whether any sites justify selection as new or expanded MPAs for the conservation of HELCOM threatened species such as sites of particular ecological significance for their different life stages (e.g. habitats of sessile species, feeding grounds, moulting/haul-out sites, nursery and resting areas), with the aim to improve connectivity between populations and key areas along migration routes.

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5. Identify and/or map areas of ecological significance, such as migration corridors for individual or groups of HELCOM threatened species, based on the available data and possible new data, also in order to support maritime spatial planning based on the ecosystem approach.
 6. Support and, if necessary, take measures to reduce transboundary pressures and/or impacts on HELCOM threatened migrating species which are moving across national borders including such pressures and/or impacts on species not occurring within the waters where the pressures and/or impacts originate from.
 7. Encourage other international organizations or bodies to promote and strive for taking all appropriate measures in areas of their specific competence, such as in fisheries management or shipping, in order to reduce pressures and/or impacts on HELCOM threatened species.
 8. Improve the exchange of data on HELCOM threatened species between HELCOM and other international and national bodies that produce or use similar data in order to create synergies, and therefore:
 - 8.1 Consider improving data by regular systematic investigations and/or monitoring of the abundance, distribution, diversity and ecology of HELCOM threatened species or the pressures and/or impacts that are causing threats to these species,
 - 8.2 Raise awareness about the HELCOM list of threatened species amongst stakeholders and the general public, and consider to establish a permanent dialogue and exchange of knowledge between HELCOM and relevant stakeholders such as recreational and commercial fishermen, seamen.

RECOMMENDS ALSO that

9. The Contracting Parties will report on their first activities taken to implement this Recommendation in 2018, and thereafter according to the schedule to be agreed by the State & Conservation Working Group with the aim to harmonize reporting intervals and content with EU and other reporting obligations supported by this Recommendation, using an appropriate template to be developed,
10. Based on the progress in implementing this Recommendation and following the next Red List assessment of the Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes in 2019, the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention utilize new knowledge on threatened species to maintain or further improve the status of HELCOM threatened species also beyond 2021.