
Press Release

ICES and HELCOM are joining forces to further promote sustainable fisheries and a healthy Baltic Sea

25 March 2013 - How can fisheries management contribute to achieving conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)? How do different fishing practices and fishing gear affect habitats and species in the Baltic Sea? These questions are at the forefront of a Stakeholder Conference in Copenhagen being held over the next two days, organized by HELCOM and ICES and supported by the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. This event involves policy-makers, scientific researchers, and representatives from fishermen's associations, and NGOs to discuss options for sustainable Baltic Sea fisheries and Marine Protected Areas.

The Conference, arranged within initial phase of HELCOM BALTFIMPA Project, will assist the Baltic Sea states in complying with their obligation to fulfil conservation objectives of MPAs and will feed into the broader processes under EU and global commitments. The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan requires coastal states to improve fisheries management thereby fulfilling such conservation objectives.

To assist the interaction between environmental and fisheries managers and aid in the crafting of effective conservation measures, the HELCOM BALTFIMPA Project has developed a decision-support Generic Tool that helps identify potential fishery-environment conflicts within MPAs and provides guidance for possible fishing gear solutions. The Generic Tool is prepared by the Danish Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) in cooperation with the HELCOM Secretariat. ICES has provided a first review of the tool developed in BALTFIMPA and will provide a second review, based on the outcomes of the Stakeholder Conference.

ICES involvement is based on its work in advancing applied marine science as a basis for decision-making in several MPA related projects (EMPAS, FIMPAS and Dogger Bank). ICES has also supported and coordinated research efforts on fish behavior, gear technology, integrated ecosystem assessments, and the use of spatial data in the Baltic Sea.

ICES and HELCOM are joining forces to further sustainable fisheries and science-based decision-making in the Baltic Sea through a LIFE+ project proposal to the European Commission.

Within HELCOM, by adopting the Baltic Sea Action Plan, the Baltic Sea states recommended that fisheries management should be based on the ecosystem approach and a set of actions has been approved accordingly. A dedicated Forum provides a platform for discussion between the fisheries and environmental authorities and for building up a cross-sectorial integration of environmental and fisheries policies.

Using its extensive network ICES is prepared to create frameworks and initiate processes to further the application of the ecosystem approach and to ensure that integrated ecosystem assessments and integrated advice are delivered at a regional scale. These efforts are based on sector integration, *inter alia* environmental and fisheries work that aims to support sustainable use of marine resources and conservation of the marine environment and its biodiversity.

The Conference, which will be held 25–26 March at ICES Secretariat in Copenhagen, is organized by Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) in cooperation with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

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Note to editors

The main objective of the **HELCOM BALTFIMPA Project** is to assist, on a regional level, the HELCOM Member States to comply with their obligations to fulfil conservation objectives of marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea. BALTFIMPA shall thus analyse possible conflicts between fisheries and conservation objectives in MPAs (including Baltic Sea Protected Areas and areas of NATURA 2000), taking into account the protected species, and it will identify fisheries management measures accordingly. The project is financed by Germany as part of their leadership of the priority area BIO (to preserve natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries) under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

[The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission](#), usually referred to as HELCOM, is an intergovernmental organisation of all the nine Baltic Sea countries and the EU, working to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution. HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area", known as the Helsinki Convention. For more information, visit www.helcom.fi

ICES has been involved in a series of projects on ecosystem effects of commercial fishing activities, providing the scientific information and background as well as review. The German EMPAS project in the Baltic Sea, the Dutch FIMPAS project in the North Sea, and the Danish, Dutch, German, and UK Dogger Bank Project in the North Sea. ICES has a profound knowledge base on fishing technology, bycatch of protected species, marine mammal ecology, and integrated ecosystem assessments at regional scale.

The **International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)** coordinates and promotes marine research in the North Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and Baltic Sea. ICES advises competent authorities (international commissions and governments) on marine policy and management issues related to the impacts of human activities on marine ecosystems and the management of the exploitation of living marine resources. ICES is moving towards integrated ecosystem assessment and integrated advice, delivered at the regional seas level. For more information, visit www.ices.dk.