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Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
based on a decision of the German Bundestag

Workshop 1: Blue Restoration

Opportunities for restoring marine and coastal ecosystems in the Baltic Sea

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Baltic Coast Dialog

Date: 19-20 September 2024

Postel Hotel (Post Hotel), Wolgast, Germany

Key Discussion Points & Findings from Presentations

Regulatory & Policy Landscape

- Bureaucracy identified as a major challenge, which hampers progress and participation in restoring marine and coastal areas.
- Need for simplification of legislation to address bureaucratic hurdles importance of considering international boundary waters and transboundary issues.
- Political actions are recognized as crucial in addressing challenges of blue restoration.
- Protected areas have stronger regulations, but offer restoration opportunities (e.g. Natura 2000 sites).
- Ecosystem-based management in marine spatial planning in Latvia was discussed by workshop participants as an example.
- Need to add elements of blue restoration to marine planning processes.

Scientific Insights & Challenges

- Lack of data was highlighted as a significant obstacle within a decision-making process and influences a lack of awareness among the broader audience/ public.
- Need for holistic and ecosystem-based approaches to address complex challenges in restoring marine ecosystems.
- Importance of recognizing and incorporating local ecological knowledge.
- More emphasis on better understanding of ecosystem connectivity in blue restoration
- Seagrass restoration project called “Seastore” in the German Baltic Sea is an example of successful scientific intervention in blue restoration.
- Research needed on migratory species in marine and coastal areas.
- Important to understand the effectiveness of passive vs. active restoration.
- Identifying coastal areas suitable for restoration is important.

Community & Business Engagement

- Stakeholder mapping crucial for identifying past, present, and potential future stakeholders.
- Importance of bottom-up approaches to engage local communities and stakeholders.
- Impact of tourism needs to be more considered in the management of coastal environments.
- Emphasis on storytelling and sharing success stories is important to increase attention and engagement of people.

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Cont.

- Proposal for an app or platform (budget €7,000–80,000) for information exchange and additional networking.
- Joint initiatives involving multiple stakeholders recommended.
- Offshore wind energy impact should be considered.

Take Away Messages and Action Points

- Adopt a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to problem-solving.
- Improve communication and visibility among stakeholders.
- Incorporate local and traditional knowledge in decision-making processes.
- Address conflicts of interest through increased exchange formats and communication.
- Simplify legislation and bureaucratic processes.
- Develop better software tools to facilitate engagement and data sharing.
- Some areas need active restoration to shift ecosystems back.
- Consider targeting restoration in different geographical or regulatory regions.

Next Steps and Upcoming Events

- **Next workshop:** Fisheries Management in Marine Protected Areas: Impact and Regulation of Bottom Trawling, November 29, Berlin, Germany.
- Identify priority areas for scaling up blue restoration.
- In future, we shall have a closer look at feasible restoration measures in unprotected marine areas.
- Address knowledge gaps through research on migratory species and restoration effectiveness.

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Workshop 2: Fisheries Management in MPAs

Impact and Regulation of Bottom Trawling

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Baltic Coast Dialog

Date: 29 November 2024

Hackescher Markt 4 / Neue Promenade 3,
101897 Berlin, Germany

Key Discussion Points & Findings from Presentations

Regulatory & Policy Landscape

- Illegal Trawling & Weak Enforcement: The Habitats Directive clearly prohibits bottom trawling in Special Area of Conservations (SAC), yet this activity persists due to insufficient enforcement. This highlights a gap between legislation and implementation, necessitating stronger political will and resource allocation for monitoring and prosecution. The lack of a strong "ocean litigation tradition" further compounds this issue, making legal challenges less frequent and potentially less effective. As important legal instruments we can find the Delegated Act regulating bottom-trawling in German Baltic MPAs from the EU Commission published on 28.11.2024 and the EU Marine Action Plan, which requires countries to set national roadmaps to ban bottom trawling in MPAs by 2030, also sets up the grounds for its regulation.
- EU Process Bottlenecks: The EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the complex process of creating Joint Recommendations often hinder swift and decisive action. Member States face difficulties in regulating vessels from other EU nations operating within their designated SACs, creating a "tragedy of the commons" scenario. This points to the need for streamlined decision-making processes and greater cooperation among member states. In addition, legal basis for enforcing impact assessments in Natura 2000 sites is clear and is applicable to the ban of bottom trawling in the marine protected areas within the Natura 2000 network.
- MPA Management Deficiencies: A significant number of designated MPAs, even those legally mandated to have management plans, lack them entirely. This renders these protected areas as "paper parks," vulnerable to continued destructive activities like bottom trawling. This underscores the need for prioritizing the development and implementation of effective, science-based management plans that include clear objectives, monitoring protocols, and enforcement mechanisms.

Scientific Insights & Challenges

- Differential Impacts & Data Gaps: While the detrimental effects of bottom trawling on sensitive habitats like reefs are well-documented, the impacts on other seafloor types (mud, sand, etc.) are less understood. This knowledge gap hinders effective management decisions. Furthermore, establishing robust baseline data and finding suitable control areas for comparison pose significant methodological challenges in assessing the true extent of trawling's impacts since most of the original environmental conditions is not documented.

- Fisheries Decline & Carbon Release: The observed decline in Baltic fisheries, coupled with evidence of reduced trawl marks, suggests that even within MPAs, fishing pressure may be unsustainable. Additionally, the finding that bottom trawling releases stored carbon from the seafloor adds another layer of complexity, linking this fishing practice to climate change concerns. Actual data states that 40% of Baltic seafloor is disturbed by maritime activities which is even higher in the southern Baltic Sea as of 80-100%. This highlights the need for a more holistic approach to fisheries management that considers carbon impacts alongside traditional stock assessments. Bottom trawling impacts go beyond target species, affecting the whole marine ecosystem.
- Stock Assessment Limitations: Traditional stock assessment models may not fully capture the complex dynamics of fish populations, including the impacts of recreational fishing and other environmental factors. This can lead to inaccurate assessments of fishing pressure and potentially unsustainable quota setting. This calls for the development of more sophisticated models that incorporate a wider range of variables and can adapt to changing ecosystem conditions. Thus is very important for ecosystem indicators which indicate the cumulative effects of seabed disturbance caused by this fishing practice.

Community and Business Engagement

- Balancing Livelihoods & Conservation: Fishing communities understandably express concerns about the economic impacts of regulations on their livelihoods. Finding a balance between conservation goals and the need to support these communities is crucial. This requires open dialogue, exploring alternative income streams, and providing support for transitioning to more sustainable fishing practices. In addition, there is a great need to create a positive vision and foster ocean citizenship. Another idea to support local coastal fisheries and fish productivity is to restrict bottom trawling in coastal waters.
- Collaborative Solutions & Economic Trade-offs: Building trust and fostering collaboration with fishers is essential for effective MPA management. Recognizing the value of traditional knowledge and involving fishers in the design and implementation of conservation measures can lead to greater buy-in and compliance. Furthermore, the economic trade-offs between bottom trawling revenue and the long-term value of ecosystem services (including carbon sequestration) need to be clearly articulated to inform policy decisions.

- It is roughly estimated that economic costs of bottom trawling are much higher than the services that the ecosystem provides, thus from the economic perspective is not a profitable practice, in general. Another highlighted need is to build alliances with fishers to jointly identify critical areas for fish population recovery as well as biodiverse underwater ecosystems.

Take Away Messages and Action Points:

- Shifting from Paper Parks to Real Protection: Moving beyond simply designating MPAs on paper to actively managing and enforcing their protection is paramount. This requires a concerted effort to develop and implement management plans, strengthen enforcement capacity, and address the legal and policy bottlenecks that hinder effective protection. A way forward can be to have emphasize in the legal instruments that already exist and present more court cases against this practice.
- Building a Multi-Stakeholder Coalition: Creating a broad coalition that includes scientists, policymakers, fishers, environmental organizations, and local communities is essential for achieving meaningful change. This requires open communication, shared decision-making, and a commitment to finding solutions that address both ecological and socioeconomic concerns.
- Integrating Science, Policy, and Action: Bridging the gap between scientific understanding, policy development, and on-the-ground action is crucial. This means translating research findings into concrete policy recommendations, advocating for stronger regulations, and supporting initiatives that promote sustainable fishing practices and restore the health of the Baltic Sea ecosystem.
- Concrete steps forward: Over 200,000 signatures on petition against bottom-trawling was handed out in November this year to the German Ministry of Agriculture. This was a joint action of many environmental organisations. Close the information gap on MPAs and bottom-trawling locations, to calculate the real impact of bottom trawling in general. It was also suggested that more joint actions within the diffrent organisations working in this topic is needed and reach out actions should be placed in the agenda of those involved, this could be in the form of an MPA Forum or MPA working group for the Baltic Sea.

Upcoming Workshop: Klaipeda, Lithuania 30-31 January 2025

Continued Collaboration: Join the Baltic Coast Dialog Network for ongoing engagement

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Workshop 3: Invasive species in the Baltic Sea

Dealing with challenges and opportunities of non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Date: 30-31 January 2025

Klaipeda University, Marine Research Institute, Universiteto al. 17, Klaipėda

Baltic Coast Dialog

Key Discussion Points & Findings from Presentations

Regulatory & Policy Landscape

- European Regulations on Invasive Species: prevention is the most cost-effective strategy. The EU Regulation 1143/2014 sets a framework for managing invasive allien species (IAS), including an updated list of species of Union concern and upcoming evaluations of regulation effectiveness. A rapid eradication fund is set to launch in March 2025.
- HELCOM's Efforts in the Baltic Sea: HELCOM focuses on monitoring and policy work related to non-indigenous species (NIS), particularly in ballast water management and biofouling. Although prevention efforts have reduced introductions, new species continue to enter naturally, making complete eradication unlikely.
- Challenges in Maritime Biosecurity: Managing invasive species in maritime traffic is complex due to fragmented responsibilities across sectors and national regulations. The Ballast Water Management Convention and biofouling guidelines help mitigate risks, but gaps remain in monitoring and coordination. Collaborative efforts, including citizen science and interdisciplinary studies, are crucial for early detection and improved response strategies.

Scientific Insights & Challenges

- Biological Invasions in the Baltic Sea: Over the past 40 years, the number of non-indigenous species (NIS) has increased significantly, with around three new species arriving per year. Stakeholders are concerned about biological pollution, its effects on ecosystems, human health, and economic consequences. The traditional dichotomy of native vs. alien species is being questioned in favor of a more functional role-based evaluation.
- Climate Change and Invasive Species: The Biodiversa+ project "CLIMATE INVASIVES" studies how climate change facilitates the spread of invasive species in marine protected areas, focusing on species distribution modeling and stakeholder engagement. Changes in water temperature, salinity, and currents influence the establishment and dispersal of NIS, highlighting the need for coordinated management across different countries.
- Round Goby Invasion in the Baltic: The round goby has successfully spread throughout the Baltic Sea. Studies show its adaptability, reproductive success, and role in the food web, with lower bioaccumulation of harmful substances compared to other fish. While its presence is altering ecosystems, discussions continue on whether it should be classified as a biopollutant or part of a naturalization process.

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Community & Business Engagement

- Impact of Invasive Species on Baltic Fisheries: The environmental, economic, and cultural impacts of invasive species on Baltic Sea fisheries, including interference with fish stocks and fishing operations is recognized. CINEA outlined key tasks such as identifying main non-indigenous species (NIS) and assessing knowledge gaps regarding their effects.
- Round Goby as a Commercial Opportunity: The "If you can't beat them, eat them" initiative in Latvia showcased round goby as an economic opportunity, with Latvia being the only country in the Baltic region with a dedicated fishery for it. Challenges include bycatch risks, market acceptance, and processing limitations, but product development (fried goby, canned goby, pet snacks) is underway.
- Scientific Insights on NIS Impacts: Henn Ojaveer presented findings from published studies indicating that NIS have been recognized since the 1980s, but quantitative impact data has been scarce until the 2000s. A meta-analysis revealed that many NIS have uncertain or unquantified effects, with fish communities being the most impacted. A universal impact assessment framework was proposed for better spatially explicit evaluations.

Takeaway Messages & Action Points

For Policymakers & Environmental Organizations:

- Stakeholders agree on the need for coordinated NIS management efforts across countries, due to specificity of the Baltic Sea, eradication is not likely.
- Regional cooperation is key to successful management of non indigenous species.
- Balancing prevention efforts with the reality of ongoing non indigenous species introductions remains a challenge.
- Continued efforts and persistence are necessary in addressing NIS challenges

For Scientists & Researchers:

- Shift focus is needed from “native vs. non-native” species classification to functional ecological roles.
- Advance eDNA and citizen science initiatives to improve data collection.
- Develop interdisciplinary studies comparing regional invasive species dynamics.

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For Industry & Local Communities:

- New fund for quick species erradication will open in Q1 -2025 for calls to help with invasive species erradication. More information will be available on IUCN Save Our Species - Your partner to protect biodiversity
- Encourage sustainable fisheries for invasive species, like round goby, to reduce their impact while providing economic benefits.
- Improve public education on invasive species and their management.
- Support businesses in adapting processing techniques for new commercial species.

Upcoming Events:

- **Upcoming Workshop**: **Stockholm, Sweden, 3 April 2025**
- **Final Conference**: **Stralsund, Germany, 22-24 September 2025**
- Continued Collaboration: **Join the Baltic Coast Dialog Network** for ongoing engagement

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Workshop 4:
Ecosystem Based Management and Fisheries
WORKSHOP RESULTS

Baltic Coast Dialog

Date: 04 April 2025

ABF-huset, Sveavägen 41, Stockholm

Key Discussion Points & Findings from Presentations

Regulatory & Policy Landscape

- EU Fisheries Policy and EBFM: The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Article 2.3 requires Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM), but implementation remains weak due to political compromises (e.g., Bothnian herring quotas set at 55,000t).
- HELCOM's Role: While HELCOM's EBFM working group has developed guidelines, only 4 Baltic species are currently in "good ecological status" according to HOLAS assessments.
- Challenges in Fisheries Governance: Fragmented national interests and short-term economic priorities often override scientific advice. The precautionary approach is rarely applied, even for collapsed stocks like Baltic cod.

Scientific Insights & Challenges

- EBFM Concepts and Baltic Realities: Over the past decade, EBFM principles (e.g., multispecies management, habitat protection) have gained theoretical traction but face implementation gaps. Stakeholders highlighted confusion between terms like EBM, EBFM, and EAM.
- Climate Change and Fisheries: The Biodiversa+ project "CLIMFISH" studies how warming waters affect fish distributions (e.g., cod thresholds at 16°C). Warmer temperatures may require redefining traditional poulation boundaries.
- Baltic Cod Collapse: ICES data shows the eastern Baltic cod poulation remains below safe biological limits. Discussions emphasized the need for ecosystem-linked reference points (e.g., "Feco") rather than single-species MSY.

Community & Business Engagement

- Fisheries and Local Livelihoods: The "Pike Factories" initiative (Swedish Anglers' Association) demonstrated how restoring wetlands can revive predatory fish populations, benefiting both ecosystems and recreational fishing.
- BalticWaters' ReCod Project: Explored releasing cod through aquaculture, with early trials showing adaptation potential. Challenges include high costs and scalability.
- Stakeholder Conflicts: Small-scale fishers expressed frustration over quotas favoring industrial fleets. The Stockholm Archipelago co-management model was presented as a way to balance ecological and economic needs.

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Workshop 4:
Ecosystem Based Management and Fisheries

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Date: 04 April 2025

ABF-huset, Sveavägen 41, Stockholm

Takeaway Messages & Action Points

For Policymakers & Environmental Organizations:

- Strengthen enforcement of CFP's EBFM mandate through legal action (e.g., challenging quota violations).
- Support regional EBFM pilots (e.g., Stockholm Archipelago) to test co-management approaches.
- Advocate for HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan reforms to align fisheries with biodiversity goals.

For Scientists & Researchers:

- Develop practical EBFM metrics (e.g., "Feco") for ICES advice.
- Prioritize studies on climate-resilient fisheries and multispecies interactions.
- Expand fisher participation in data collection (e.g., BalticWaters' fisher surveys).

For Industry & Local Communities:

- Promote alternative livelihoods (e.g., restorative aquaculture like ReCod).
- Improve consumer awareness of sustainable Baltic seafood choices.
- Engage in regional working groups (e.g., HELCOM's EBFM network) to voice concerns.

For further information, visit: Baltic Coast Dialog Website

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Workshop 5: Marine Mammal and Bird Bycatch in the Baltic Sea - Turning Knowledge Into Action WORKSHOP RESULTS

Baltic Coast Dialog

Date: 13-14 November 2025

Prof. Krzysztof Skóra Hel Marine Station, University of Gdansk, Hel, Poland

Key Discussion Points & Findings from Presentations

The fifth and final workshop addressed a further key driver of biodiversity loss in the Baltic Sea, bycatch of marine mammals and seabirds - highlighting a holistic approach to marine conservation and the urgent need for effective bycatch-reduction measures in fisheries.

Regulatory & Policy Landscape

EU level: A set of European Union (EU) legislative texts is in place to ensure the conservation of vulnerable marine mammals and birds in EU waters. The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) prohibit the deliberate killing or disturbance of listed species, such as harbour porpoises and all seabirds, as well as the destruction of their habitats. EU Regulation 2019/1241 also bans the catching, retention, transshipment or landing of these species, though when caught accidentally the above shall be permitted for the recovery of the animal or scientific research purposes.

BALTFISH: The Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum - a regional fisheries body with the primary goal to improve coordination and cooperation among Baltic Sea member states. Between 2020 and 2021, BALTFISH submitted joint recommendations to the EU, which included measures such as a ban on static nets in areas important for harbour porpoises and the use of pingers in certain marine areas, with the aim of reducing the bycatch rate of harbour porpoises and other species.

ASCOBANS: Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas - A platform comprising governments, NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, fisheries and scientists to coordinate the conservation of small cetaceans in the Baltic Sea. Although ASCOBANS provides action plans, reporting frameworks and mitigation measures, it lacks enforcement capabilities. Challenges include fragmented jurisdiction between environmental and fisheries authorities, as well as practical issues such as the use of pingers and the regulation of gillnets.

HELCOM: The expertise on both small cetaceans and seals in the Baltic Sea is also provided by HELCOM through the EG MAMA, where bycatch mitigation is one of the target issues next to health status, abundance and other threats to the populations.

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Scientific Insights & Challenges

Monitoring: While bycatch is regarded as one of the most significant sources of premature mortality in many marine mammal and bird species, scientific data monitoring remains crucial.
Monitoring projects like the Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise (SAMBAH) show Baltic harbour porpoise mortality exceeds safe limits, with seabirds also threatened by bycatch, especially near Polish estuaries.

Mitigation: Mitigation measures recommended by ICES and the EU, such as static net closures, seasonal restrictions, and the use of pingers, acoustic deterrents that keep marine mammals away from nets, have only been partially implemented. The use of pingers was shown to be effective for harbour porpoises but less so for seals, and alternative approaches must balance conservation goals with fishers' livelihoods. Offshore wind developments add additional threats, further highlighting the need for effective mitigation. HELCOM has developed a toolbox containing over 70 mitigation measures, including gear modifications, operational changes, and area closures. Seasonal closures during breeding or migration periods are effective for protecting seabirds, whereas year-round closures provide more comprehensive protection for porpoises. Local initiatives, such as those by Hel Marine Station (University of Gdansk), reveal the challenges of accurate data collection. After the 2004 EU ban on drift nets, voluntary reporting of bycaught animals by fishers ceased, obscuring bycatch impacts and pointing out the importance of implementing well-targeted and acceptable mitigation measures.

Adopt new measures: Challenges remain in convincing fishers to adopt new measures and in aligning mitigation strategies with existing regulations and economic constraints. Projects such as UNCATCH and STELLA 2 have explored innovative solutions, including tracking seabird behavior and testing alternative gears like pearl nets, fish pots, pontoon traps, and mini seines. Early results show promise in reducing bycatch while maintaining catch efficiency, although broad implementation is still limited. Emergency measures for the Baltic Proper for harbour porpoise, initiated by civil society in 2019 and followed by ICES and EU advice on mitigation measures in the Baltic marine NATURA2000 sites, have led to seasonal limits in gillnet fishery with the exception of Puck Bay, Poland, where only mandatory pinger use was implemented. Other recommended measures, including alternative gears and broader area closures, remain underutilized. A holistic transformation of fisheries is urgently needed, incorporating cumulative ecosystem effects, expanded monitoring, alternative fishing technologies, and education to foster a cultural shift toward mindful conservation. Across countries, mitigation measures vary, with Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Poland implementing localized closures, static net phase-outs, and pinger requirements, all limited to MPAs, yet a comprehensive and coordinated approach is still lacking. In the workshop, scientists agreed: Immediate action is needed without waiting for more data.

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A key result of the workshop was the development of concrete recommendations to reduce bycatch:

A) Marine mammals - Problems Identified

- REM/EM (electronic monitoring) inclusion of small vessels, and data collection still widely lacking
- Cumulative effects (windfarms impact) influence negatively marine mammal species
- Lack of cuntry based recommendations

Recommendations to reduce bycatch of marine mammals

- Deep transformation of fisheries through EBM (Ecosystem Based Management) → adaptive, flexible and cumulative effects are taken into account (see workshop 4)
- Create area closures for fishing and where no other activities are allowed, reducing fishing pressure, and ensuring each country monitors and enforces rules properly
- The Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH)-toolbox should be fully used to support these actions
- Pingers should be used in certain offshore areas.
- Recommendations from ASCOBANS should be followed consistently
- ICES recommendations should also apply to waters outside protected areas, ensuring a coordinated approach to reduce marine mammal bycatch across the Baltic Sea
- REM (remote electronic monitoring) should be implemented on small vessels
- Country based control and compliance should be implemented
- Compilation of existing and new measures as a document sent to country representatives
- Areas outside territorial waters a way to go → EU competence

B) Seabirds - Problems Identified

- Areas of high seabird bycatches identified in different parts of the Baltic Sea
- Wintering and moulting areas at the highest risk, especially during peak fishing effort
- Cumulative effects: disturbance from tourism (kite surfing and recreational boats) can increase bycatch risk by relocating birds and increasing energy demands
- Accurate data on bird distribution and fishing effort is critical for creating risk maps and tailoring measures
- The cause of bycatch is different for birds than for seabirds so different measures are needed

Recommendations to recuce bycatch of seabirds

- Effective mitigation requires a targeted approach as there is no single solution.
- Most effective measures: seasonal closures in high-risk areas
- Where not possible, adaptations in fishing operations or the use of fishing gears can help, e.g.:
- night setting in combination with predator shaped kites (effective for velvet scooter, long-tailed duck, red-throated diver)

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Workshop 5: Marine Mammal and Bird Bycatch in the Baltic Sea - Turning Knowledge Into Action WORKSHOP RESULTS

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- Other species (greater scaup, common eider) require species-specific approaches
- Real-time closures are an option in well-monitored areas, effective for species forming larger aggregations
- Complementary measures in other sectors, especially NATURA2000/SPAs, are essential

For both animal groups:

- Implement bycatch EM-systems as they have proven to be effective, innovative, and cost-efficient for assessing anthropogenic impacts on birds (and mammals)
- Awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement is needed to successfully mitigate indirect impacts
- Stakeholder involvement is key for acceptance and successful implementation of mitigation measures

C) Community Engagement

Challenges and realities

- Local and state authorities may resist conservation due to existing interests
- Conservation often relies on building a critical mass and sometimes requires compromise
- Role clarity is important to build and maintain trust

Engagement strategies

- Effective change requires engaging the public and influencing policymakersIdentify who needs to be engaged and how to reach people effectively
- On-the-ground involvement is key; without local engagement, change is difficult
- Physical presence, spending time with affected groups (e.g., fishermen), and finding common ground to help build trust
- Local contexts and traditional mindsets must be acknowledged
- Clear communication and shared language
- Influence changing the consumers priorities – environmental values are important
- To “break the bubble” and mainstream environmental issues, influential and trusted individuals are needed to reach wider audiences
- Environmental education needs to be successfully integrated into society and schools, particularly through relevant ministries (to adjust curriculum)
- Clear communication and shared language
- Using more precise terms (e.g. “biosphere” instead of “nature”, “literacy” instead of “education”) can improve the understanding of the goals

Workshop 5: Marine Mammal and Bird Bycatch in the Baltic Sea - Turning Knowledge Into Action WORKSHOP RESULTS

Date: 13-14 November 2025

Cont.

- Communication should flow both ways – sharing knowledge and expertise while receiving knowledge back
- We need compelling, relatable narratives
- Stories that connect emotionally with people necessary to motivate engagement
- Multidimensional thinking and acting should be encouraged

Transformation and adaptation

- Old attitudes and measures cannot solve new problems.
- Power lies in the public: individuals outside formal institutions.
- Lasting change and transformation are rooted in ongoing adaptatio

In conclusion, effective Baltic Sea conservation requires bridging the gap between humans and nature, improving data collection and monitoring, implementing a wider range of mitigation measures, and fostering public and stakeholder engagement. **Bycatch remains a critical threat**, and **long-term solutions will depend on adopting holistic, mindful conservation approaches that integrate science, indigenous and local knowledge,** and an emotional connection to the marine environment. Without such transformative action, the protection of harbour porpoises, seabirds, seals, and broader Baltic Sea biodiversity will remain insufficient.