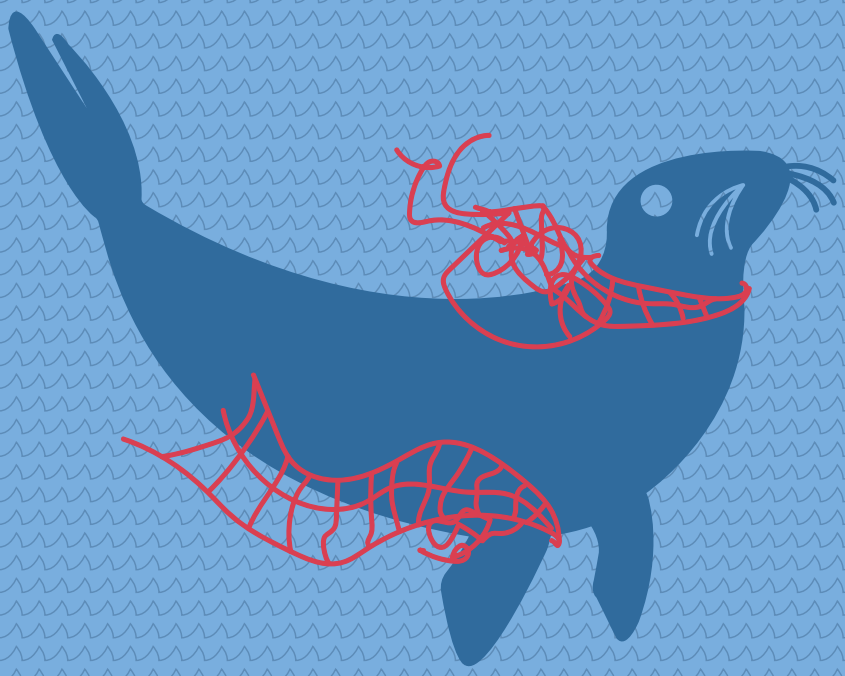
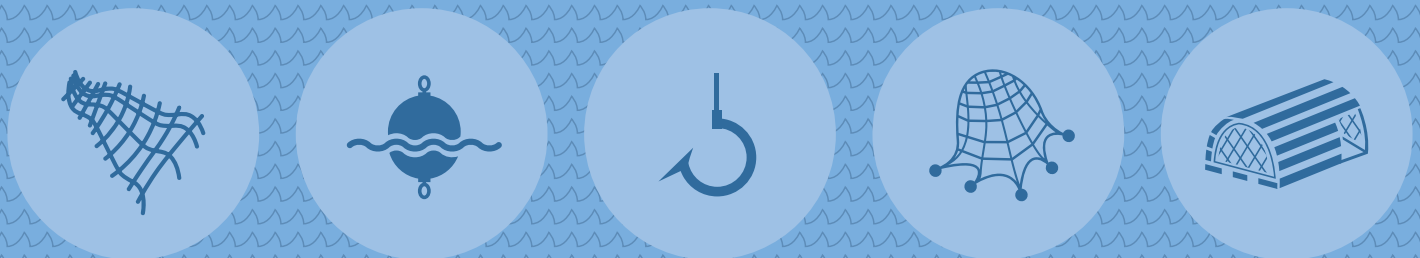
Lost angling gear in the Baltic Sea: Composition and appropriate measures to limit losses (RS8)

Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Marine litter

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1. Introduction

Recreational fishing is a very popular leisure activity in Baltic Sea countries. IVL, the Swedish Environmental Research Institute, calculated the number of active recreational fishers in the Baltic Sea to be approximately 3.93 million (IVL 2023). IVL defined recreational fishing as: "fishing that has a recreational purpose where the catch is either released back to nature or used in the own household or town livestock farming. Recreation fishing does not include catches that are sold. Within the EU, it is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catches." The recreational fishing sector also has a significant socio-economic and environmental importance for countries surrounding the Baltic Sea (Coalition Clean Baltic 2017). The large amount of recreational fishing activity leads to the loss of a significant amount of recreational fishing gear each year. IVL estimated that 21 million baits, 9 million sinkers and 96 million metres of fishing line were lost by HELCOM countries per year. (IVL 2023) The associated environmental consequences would therefore be substantial. There has been an increased focus by NGOs and government agencies in recent years. Both HELCOM and OSPAR have, for example, placed a focus on recreational fishing gear in their most recent Regional Action Plans (HELCOM 2021 (RS8) and OSPAR 2022 (B4.4)). The issue is being addressed with policy directed at actions to reduce the amount of lost fishing gear and through remediation action to remove lost fishing gear.

HELCOM, adopted the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP) at the 2021 Ministerial Meeting. Built on experience implementing the previous RAP for marine litter from 2015 as well as the most recent data, the plan provides actions on reducing inputs of marine litter to the Baltic Sea to be progressed by HELCOM Contracting Parties (HELCOM 2021).

This report addresses action RS8 under RAP actions addressing sea-based sources of marine litter. More specifically, the action addresses Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) from angling. The report presents an overview of the status of relevant regulations and standards and available information on the implementation by HELCOM Contracting Parties. The report provides recommendations and guidance for potential measures that HELCOM and its Contracting Parties could implement.

2. Background: the status of action RS8

Action RS8 of the RAP is to: “evaluate the amounts and composition of lost angling gear in the Baltic Sea including fishing lures and casting weights with corresponding hooks, soft plastic baits and light components and develop appropriate measures to prevent their further loss.”

The operational targets for this action is defined as: “the action will contribute to the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) ecological objective for marine litter “No harm to marine life from litter” and BSAP management objectives for marine litter ”Prevent generation of waste and its input to the sea, including microplastics” and ”Significantly reduce amounts of litter on shorelines and in the sea”.

An implementation plan was drafted by the lead country of the action, Sweden. The final outcome was to create a HELCOM document with appropriate measures to prevent and reduce losses from recreational fishing gear that Contracting Parties could start to implement (HELCOM 2024a).

The first task was to undertake a study on the amounts and composition of lost fishing gear including traps, pots and handheld fishing gear including fishing lures, baits, casting weights with corresponding hooks, fishing lines and light components from recreational fishing in the Nordic countries.

A report was published by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2022. The study compiled available information from Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) on the quantity and composition of lost fishing gear originating mainly from sport and recreational fishing activities. It also considered the potential impact on the aquatic environment of harmful chemicals associated with lost fishing gear. The report developed and proposed appropriate measures to prevent further loss of fishing gear and to mitigate any negative impacts.

The authors noted the caveat that the quantity and composition of lost fishing gear are difficult to estimate due to the general lack of data giving rise to rough estimates and it is based on many assumptions. Averages of amounts of lost gear were calculated using surveys of recreational fishers, the calculated number of active sport and recreational fishers as well as statistics on imports, exports and industrial production. Estimated annual numbers of lost fishing gear in the Nordic countries was in the millions of baits (28 million) and sinkers (11.2 million) as well as 78-235 million meters of fishing line, 774 tonnes of fishhooks and 518-1035 tonnes of fishing gear containing fishing nets. Commercial fishing could however contribute to amounts of fishing nets and fishhooks (NCOM 2022). These numbers, however rough, give an indication of a non-insignificant problem that needs to be addressed.

Measures were proposed and are aligned with a second study defined in task 2 of the implementation plan of action RS8: “Depending on the results of the Nordic study, further studies of the amount of lost fishing gear must be carried out in the countries not included in the Nordic study.”

Thus, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management commissioned the IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute to conduct a study on the amounts and composition of lost angling gear in the Baltic to build upon the Nordic report.

The second study published in 2023 attempted to evaluate the amounts and composition of lost angling gear in the Baltic countries. It estimated the amount of lost fishing line, baits and sinkers in Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Åland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. With similar caveats and methodological drawbacks as the Nordic report, the results give an indication of the potential losses of fishing gear. The estimated number of lost fishing gear by the HELCOM countries amounts to 21 million baits, 9 million sinkers and 96 million meters of fishing line per year (IVL 2023).

Both the Nordic and the Baltic reports identified the following issues in connection to lost fishing gear:

- the lack of awareness and knowledge about the loss of fishing gear, the environmental impacts and possible mitigation measures;
- the lack of incitements to reuse, recycle or recover fishing gear;
- the lack of easily available statistics on losses of fishing gear;
- the lack of knowledge and incitements about the presence of harmful substances as well as the use of environmentally friendly materials; and
- historical losses of fishing gear.

The reports proposed measures targeting the relevant stakeholders to:

- increase awareness of the problem and solutions; municipalities and retailers should provide information on the topic to increase awareness among fishers;
- increase and improve incitements to reuse recycle or recover fishing gear;
- make statistics on losses of fishing gear and their chemical contents available;
- increase knowledge and incitements to produce and use environmentally friendly materials as well as to ban harmful substances including lead in fishing gear; and
- support operations to collect historical losses of fishing gear especially in hotspots.

Both reports point to the implementation of the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUP) and upcoming extended producer responsibility scheme including fishing gear in the Nordic countries as important drivers that will support positive developments and help to reduce lost gear.

3. Implementation with an emphasis on marking and reporting

As part of the evaluation of the implementation of action RS8, after the Nordic and IVL reports, the next steps are: “to follow the adoption of the new EU Fisheries Control Regulation, including the potential future implementing acts on recreational fisheries. Depending on the requirements of the implementing acts, additional measures may be considered at regional level in relation to marking and reporting. HELCOM should also follow the standardization process in the CEN Technical Committee 466 on circularity and recyclability of fishing and aquaculture gear and once the standard is completed, give consideration to whether a regional implementation of the standard is needed. This would lead to a discussion among HELCOM Contracting Parties if the suggested measures, to reduce losses from recreational fishing gear, are to be implemented or not. A milestone for this action would be to develop a recommendation on appropriate measures that could be developed and implemented by HELCOM countries” (HELCOM 2024b).

4. Single-Use Plastics Directive and plastic fishing gear

EU Directive 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (the SUP Directive) was passed on 5 June 2019. The Directive intends to prevent and reduce the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, with a focus on the aquatic environment and human health. It promotes the transition to a circular economy through innovative and sustainable business models, products and materials (EU 2019). The Directive targets certain single-use plastic products including fishing gear containing plastic.

The Directive defines fishing gear and waste fishing gear as:

"**fishing gear** means any item or piece of equipment that is used in fishing or aquaculture to target, capture or rear marine biological resources or that is floating on the sea surface, and is deployed with the objective of attracting and capturing or of rearing such marine biological resources.

waste fishing gear means any fishing gear covered by the definition of waste in point 1 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC, ("**waste**" means any substance or object which the holder discards or intends or is required to discard) including all separate components, substances or materials that were part of or attached to such fishing gear when it was discarded, including when it was abandoned or lost."

Fishing gear containing plastic is regulated under the SUP Directive's Article 8 on extended producer responsibility (EPR), Article 10 on awareness raising measures and Article 13 on information systems and reporting.

Regarding EPR, EU Member States shall:

1. ensure that producers of plastic fishing gear on its territory distributing to other Member States, where no authorised representative has been appointed, are responsible for fulfilling the Directive's obligations of the producer in those Member States';
2. ensure that EPR schemes in accordance with Article 8 and 8a of the EU Waste Directive (2008/98/EC) are established for fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market of the EU Member State;
3. set a minimum annual collection rate of waste fishing gear containing plastic for recycling. The Directive points towards establishing EU-wide collection targets; and
4. ensure that producers of fishing gear containing plastic cover the costs of the separate collection of waste fishing gear containing plastic that has been delivered to adequate port reception facilities or to other equivalent collection systems and the costs of its subsequent transport and treatment.

Regarding awareness raising activities, EU Member States shall take measures to inform consumers and to incentivise responsible consumer behaviour, in order to reduce litter from products covered by the Directive, and shall take measures to inform users of fishing gear containing plastic about the following: (a) the availability of re-usable alternatives, re-use systems and waste management options for fishing gear containing plastic as well as best practices in sound waste management carried out in accordance with Article 13 of the Waste Directive (2008/98/EC); (b) the impact of littering and other inappropriate waste disposal of fishing gear containing plastic on the environment, in particular on the marine environment. Producers shall also cover the costs of the awareness raising measures referred to in Article 10 regarding fishing gear containing plastic.

EU Member States shall, according to Article 13, report data on fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market and on waste fishing gear collected in the EU Member State each year to the Commission. The Commission's Implementing Decision 2021/958 of 31 May 2021 provides a format for reporting data and information on fishing gear placed on the market and waste fishing gear collected in EU Member States and the format for the quality check report in accordance with Article 13 (EU 2021).

5. European Fisheries Control Legislation

The new EU Fisheries Control Regulation 2023/2824 was published in December 2023. It entered into force as of 9 January 2024. This European regulation aims to modernise and unify the control system for fishing activities in the European Union.

Article 55 of the regulation directs Member States to ensure that recreational fisheries on their territory and in European Union waters are conducted in a manner compatible with the objectives and rules of the common fisheries policy. In order to do this, EU Member States must have an electronic system in place to record and report catches from recreational fisheries. In addition, they need to ensure that recreational fishers are registered and that they, or a legal person acting on their behalf, use this electronic system for the purpose of recording and reporting catches of certain species, stocks or groups of stocks. The marketing or sale of catches from recreational fisheries is prohibited.

Coastal EU Member States may use an electronic system developed at national or Union level. If one or more coastal EU Member States so request by 10 May 2024, the Commission shall develop such a system. A requesting EU Member State shall implement the system as developed by the Commission.

Paragraph 6 of Article 55 states that "the Commission may, by way of implementing acts, adopt detailed rules concerning (b) the marking of gear used for recreational fisheries, except handheld gear, in a simple and proportionate manner" (EU 2023).

Regulation (EU) 2024/2594 of 18 September 2024 added to articles 8 to 17 of the Implementing Regulation (EU) 404/2011 that gear used by Union fishing vessels in the Regulatory Area should be marked in accordance with generally accepted international standards, in particular the Convention on Conduct of Fishing Operation in the North Atlantic signed in London on 1 June 1967. This regulation applies to commercial fisheries. It is prohibited to deploy fishing gear that is not marked, if marking is required, or if the marking does not meet these requirements. NEAFC[1] fisheries inspectors may remove and dispose of fishing gear with non-compliant marking, as well as fish that are found in the gear (EU 2024).

[1] NEAFC stands for North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

6. Progress on CEN/TC 466

The CEN[2] Technical Committee 466 on circularity and recyclability of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment developed the EN 17988 "Circular design of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment" series of standards which were adopted and published in November 2024. The standards aim to provide stakeholders in the fishing gear and aquaculture equipment sector with requirements, recommendations and guidelines to address six aspects of circular design of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment containing plastics from the design phase across the entire life cycle:

- part 1: general requirements and guidelines;
- part 2: user manuals and labelling;
- part 3: technical requirements and guidelines;
- part 4: environmental and circularity requirements and guidelines;
- part 5: circular business models; and
- part 6: requirements and guidelines for digitalisation of information of components of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment.

These standards provide HELCOM Contracting Parties with guidance and tools to drive the circular design of fishing gear. The standards also provide requirements, recommendations and guidelines on issues such as labeling, traceability, proper management during all aspects of the life cycle of the fishing gear, EPR schemes, and more efficient use of materials (CEN/TC 466 2024).

[2] CEN stands for European Committee for Standardization.

7. Progress on the implementation of EU directives

HELCOM Contracting Parties were asked a series of questions related to the implementation of the SUP Directive (EU Directive 2019/904), the EU Fisheries Control Legislation (2023/2824) and the CEN Standard (EN 17988) on the circular design of fishing gear as they relate to gear from recreational fisheries. Denmark, Finland, Poland, Latvia and Sweden responded in full or in part to the request for information. The results from the request for information are presented here.

Status of implementation of the Single Use Plastic Directive's Article 8 on EPR

Question 1a: does your country ensure that producers of plastic fishing gear (in your country) which sell in other EU Member States appoint an authorised representative, responsible for fulfilling the Directive's obligations of the producer in the other EU Member States territory?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark	X			
Estonia			X	
Finland	X			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

Denmark has producers of plastic fishing gear and has implemented this regulation.

Finland responded that they have producers of plastic fishing gear and have implemented this through the SUP producer Group Ltd established in 2022. It has 43 registered members with enterprises related to products of fishing gear as of November 2024.

Poland has producers of plastic fishing gear and has implemented this regulation.

Sweden answered that they have producers of plastic fishing gear and have implemented this. The Swedish EPR regulates that these producers must appoint a representative/agent with a written power of attorney.

Question 1b: does your country ensure that EPR schemes in accordance with Article 8 and 8a of the EU Waste Directive (2008/98/EC) are established for fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market in your country?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark	X			
Estonia			X	
Finland	X			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

Denmark has implemented EPR on fishing gear containing plastics from 1 January 2024.

Finland answered that 150 EPR collection points would be established by 1 January 2025, of which 75 will be fixed and 75 mobile collection units. This has been in a piloting stage since November 2024 and consists of 13 fixed collection points.

Poland noted that it has integrated this in the Act on obligations of entrepreneurs in the field of managing certain types of waste and on the product fee (8d).

Sweden responded that municipalities are starting to collect end-of-life fishing gear in 2025 and then a producer responsibility organisation, which has just been formed, will start collecting end-of-life fishing gear at various locations for commercial fishing and pick up end-of-life fishing gear from the municipalities that have collected it.

Question 1c: does your country set a minimum collection rate of waste fishing gear containing plastic for recycling?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark	X			
Estonia			X	
Finland	X			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

Denmark has set a minimum annual collection rate at 20%.

In Finland, the target is to collect at least 10 % of the total weight of fishing gear annually entering the market of fishing gear.

Poland has implemented this in the aforementioned Act (8d par. 3). In Poland, producers who place fishing gear containing plastic on the market are obliged to achieve a minimum annual collection rate for recycling fishing gear constituting waste containing plastic of at least:

1) 5% by weight - for the year 2024;

2) 10% by weight - for the year 2025;

3) 15% by weight - for the year 2026;

4) 20% by weight - for the year 2027;

5) 25% by weight - for the year 2028;

6) 27% by weight - for the year 2029; and

7) 30% by weight - for the year 2030 and for each subsequent year.

In Sweden, the goal is that the amount of waste consisting of fishing gear collected separately during a calendar year by 2027 at the latest should constitute at least 20 % of the amount of fishing gear released on the Swedish market during the same calendar year. The calculation must be made based on weight.

Question 1d: does your country ensure that producers of fishing gear containing plastic cover the costs of the separate collection of waste fishing gear containing plastic that has been delivered to adequate port reception facilities or to other equivalent collection systems and the costs of its subsequent transport and treatment?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark	X			
Estonia			X	
Finland	X			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

In Denmark, producers cover costs of transportation and waste treatment of fishing gear delivered to port reception facilities in 16 Danish commercial ports.

Finland answered that this regulation was implemented and had no further comments.

Poland has implemented this in the aforementioned Act (8d par. 1 and 2). They note that a producer who places fishing gear containing plastic on the market is obliged to finance the costs of selective collection of fishing gear constituting waste containing plastic, which has been delivered to entrepreneurs operating port facilities for receiving waste in accordance with the regulations on port reception facilities for receiving waste from ships or to entrepreneurs operating other equivalent collection systems, as well as to finance the costs of transport and processing of the waste.

Costs for producers of fishing gear containing plastic is regulated in the Swedish EPR legislation. Sweden is investigating how to allow exceptions in order to keep the separate collection within a reasonable cost in relation to the amount of fishing gear waste.

Status for implementation of the SUP Directive's Article 10 on measures to inform consumers through awareness raising measures

Question 2a: does your country inform consumers as to the availability of re-usable alternatives, re-use systems and waste management options for fishing gear containing plastic as well as best practices in sound waste management carried out in accordance with Article 13 of the Waste Directive?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark		(X)		
Estonia			X	
Finland		X		
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	(X)			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

The Danish Environmental Agency will be responsible for implementing awareness raising campaigns, which the producers will pay for via an administrative fee. With the EPR legislation in force from 1 January 2025 no campaigns have yet been made.

Finland responded that the measures were not implemented. According to the Finnish SUP Producers Group Ltd (FSPG) a collection network of the fishing related waste is being built.

Poland has implemented this in the aforementioned Act on the obligations of entrepreneurs in the field of managing certain types of waste and on the product fee (11b par 3). The status of information campaigns was not provided.

Sweden noted that the obligation to provide information about availability of re-usable alternatives, re-use systems and waste management options for fishing gear lies with the producer responsibility organization according to the Swedish regulation on fishing gear.

Question 2b: does your country inform consumers as to the impact of littering and other inappropriate waste disposal of fishing gear containing plastic in particular on the marine environment?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark		(X)	X	
Estonia			X	
Finland		(X)		
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	(X)			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

Denmark indicated that no campaigns have yet been made as the national EPR legislation has only come into force on 1 January 2025. The Danish Environmental Agency will be responsible for implementing awareness raising campaigns and the producers will pay via an administrative fee.

Finland noted that an information campaign is being planned within an EU Life project.

Poland has implemented this in the Act on the obligations of entrepreneurs in the field of managing certain types of waste and on the product fee (11b par 3). No additional information was received.

Sweden reported that the obligation to provide information about the impact of littering and other appropriate waste disposal lies with the producer responsibility organization according to the Swedish regulation on fishing gear. In addition, the Swedish Programme of Measures (PoM) under the MSFD has a specific measure (ÅPH19) on marine litter from fishing gear, which includes targeted information to fishers (commercial as well as recreational). The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management have run several campaigns to raise awareness about how to prevent gear loss, such as this one: https://www.havochvatten.se/fiske-och-handel/regler-och-lagar/arter-regler-for-fiske-och-rapportering/hummerfiske---regler/minska-forlusten-av-hummerburar-och-tinor.html

Question 2c: do producers cover the costs of the awareness raising measures referred to in Article 10 regarding fishing gear containing plastic?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark	X			
Estonia			X	
Finland	(X)			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

In Denmark, producers will pay via an administrative fee.

According to the Finnish SUP Producers Group Ltd (FSPG) communication and education will be the producers' responsibility, cost will be determined at a later stage.

Poland informed that this is contained in the aforementioned Act on the obligations of entrepreneurs in the field of managing certain types of waste and on the product fee (11b par 1 and 4).

Sweden informed that the obligation to provide information about availability of re-usable alternatives, re-use systems and waste management options for fishing gear, how to avoid littering and the effect of it or non-appropriate waste management lies with the producer responsibility organization according to the Swedish regulation on fishing gear. The cost of this will be paid by producers through them paying the producer responsibility organization.

Status for implementation of the SUP Directive's Article 13 on reporting data on fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market and on waste fishing gear collected in the Member State

Question 3: what is the status of the implementation of SUP Article 13 on reporting data on fishing gear containing plastic on the market and on waste fishing gear collected in the EU Member State each year to the Commission?

Country	Yes	No	Unanswered	N/A
Denmark			X	
Estonia	X			
Finland	X			
Germany			X	
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Poland	X			
Russia				X
Sweden	X			

Denmark has reported data to the Commission in June 2024 for the year 2022. Data on fishing gear placed on the market was collected by using the following prodcom codes: 56081120, 56081180, 56089000, 95071000. Regarding fishing gear collected, Denmark has also reported data to the Commission in June 2024 for the year 2022. Data was collected by surveys to the largest Danish harbors and producers of fishing gear. Data from the Danish Waste Data System was used as well. The Danish Producers Association is an independent not-for-profit organisation established under the Danish Environmental Protection Act with the purpose to administer the national register and Danish legislation on producer responsibility.

Finland noted that this was included in the Finnish SUP Producers Group rules and producers should provide a report quarterly. Small-scale producers should provide an annual report.

Poland has implemented this in the aforementioned act (10a). They collect data directly from the producers via an electronic register (bdo.mos.gov.pl).

Sweden submitted data in June 2024. The report contained data on the amount put on the market as well as on waste fishing gear collected separately. Producers who put fishing gear on the market reported using the SEPA's electronic reporting platform. Data on waste fishing gear collected was obtained from municipalities. Information on fishing gear containing plastic that has been placed on the market, and on end-of-life fishing gear that has been collected has been reported to the Commission by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Article 55 of the EU fisheries Control Regulation

Countries were asked about the implementation of article 55 of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation regarding EU Member States having in place an electronic system to record and report catches from recreational fisheries and whether they ensure that recreational fishers are registered.

Finland has established a mobile application for reporting on a voluntary basis (omakala.fi). Finland has estimated the number of recreational fishers and their bi-annual catches through a questionnaire conducted by the Natural Resources Institute of Finland.

Latvia answered that catches of self-subsistence fishing are already recorded in the Latvian integrated fisheries and control information system (LIFCIS) and that the country is working on implementing the requirements of the Control Regulation. Latvia will further develop LIFCIS for registration of anglers and underwater hunters in their coastal waters.

Sweden is awaiting the outcomes of the negotiations of the Implementation Act for Article 55. They did not have any system in place to record and report catches from recreational fisheries.

Consideration of the CEN standard on the circular design of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment in relation to recreational fisheries

The countries were asked whether they had given any consideration to using the CEN Standard EN 17988.

Denmark has not given this standard any consideration at present.

Finland has studied the subject of circular design of fishing gear for years and the work is ongoing. No breakthrough has been achieved in terms of material quality, strength and cost.

Sweden informed that they had not given the CEN standard any consideration. The circular design of fishing gear is not regulated in the Swedish EPR. The standard is voluntary, and it remains to be seen whether the Producer Responsibility Organisation chooses to use it or not.

8. Recommendations

It would be beneficial to supplement this report with information from Contracting Parties who did not respond to requests for information and adjust any conclusions or recommendations accordingly. Many recommendations from the Nordic report (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2022) and the Baltic report (IVL, 2023) are relevant for HELCOM's continued work on the current action of the RAP ML.

Denmark, Finland, Poland and Sweden all have as of 1 January 2025 national regulations addressing the SUP Directive's Article 8 on EPR for producers of fishing gear**.** Each of these countries has producers of plastic recreational fishing gear and they have appointed authorised representatives who are responsible for fulfilling the Directive's obligations of the producer in the other EU Member States territories where these items are sold. In Finland, the SUP Producer Group Ltd was established in 2022. Organisations such as this could support national governments in the successful national implementation of EU regulations.

Some countries' national legislation is relatively new, however EPR for recreational fishing gear/angling gear containing plastics is, according to the countries that responded, in the process of being implemented. Finland and Sweden are organising collection points for end-of-life fishing gear. Finland has pilot projects for fixed and mobile collection of fishing gear and should have established 150 collection points. Sweden is organising collections through municipalities and via an EPR organisation. Information gained from these initial projects will be valuable. **Sharing experiences and the advantages and disadvantages from organisational efforts and implementation of EPR and gear collection from countries that are further along could help other HELCOM countries decide how best to organise and implement their EPR schemes.**

Denmark, Finland, Poland and Sweden have all set minimum annual collection rates for recycling of waste fishing gear containing plastic. They generally agree that annual collection rates should be based on the weight of fishing gear placed on the market in the country. The rate of collection varies, but Denmark, Poland and Sweden aim for 20% (by 2027). Finland has a goal of 10 %. Poland seems to have the most ambitious plan to reach 30% by weight by 2040. The information collected seems to indicate that the majority of the countries that responded are striving for a goal of 20 % of the total weight of fishing gear annually entering the market (by 2027). **HELCOM could discuss the possibility of setting a regional target for minimum annual collection rates and could recommend EU-wide collection targets based on the experiences from Contracting Parties in implementing their targets.**

All four countries have implemented regulations where producers of plastic fishing gear cover the costs of the separate collection of waste fishing gear as well as the costs for transport and treatment. Sweden receives a large amount of fishing gear waste and is examining how to keep costs of separate collection reasonable through the introduction of exceptions.

Since the national laws are quite recent, there has been little action to inform consumers both on the availability of re-usable alternatives, re-use systems and waste management options for fishing gear containing plastics as well as best practices in waste management. The responsibility for information campaigns has been transferred to producers' organisations in Finland and Sweden and to entrepreneurs in Poland. The Danish Environmental Agency will be responsible for informing consumers in Denmark.

Regarding information campaigns targeted consumers on the impact of littering and inappropriate waste disposal of fishing gear containing plastic, Sweden has adopted a specific measure under the MSFD to produce targeted information for commercial and recreational fisheries. They also have existing campaigns to raise awareness about how to prevent gear loss. Finland will be planning an information campaign through funding via an EU Life Project.

Costs to produce information campaigns are paid via an administrative fee in Denmark, and through the producer responsibility organization in Sweden. Poland indicates that they would be supported from the product fee. Finland has not yet determined how information campaigns would be supported.

The lack of awareness and knowledge about the loss of fishing gear, its environmental impacts and measures to reduce loss was pointed out in both the Nordic and the Baltic reports above mentioned. It is essential to raise the importance of effective information campaigns. Since this work has become the responsibility of producers' organisations in some HELCOM countries, authorities would need to work in collaboration with them and ensure that producers carry out information campaigns. Consultation with local fisheries organisations is also recommended. The relevant stakeholder, who would be delivering these messages need also to be involved in the process (e.g. port authorities, fisher's organisations, producers' organisations, retailers, municipalities and relevant government agencies). Contracting Parties should determine which outreach tool would work best in their national context, however common material could be produced regionally for signage, print media and social media. **A measure could be to examine existing campaigns which could be used to create a general information campaign for consumers and recreational fishers. A HELCOM Contracting Party could take the lead to produce draft awareness material. Once material was agreed upon, it could be supplemented by local conditions and laws and eventually translated by individual countries.**

HELCOM could make a recommendation to Contracting Parties' being also EU Member States to integrate awareness material targeted to consumers of recreational fishing gear/angling gear into their national MSFD Program of Measures based on the Swedish model.

Four countries that responded have implemented Article 13 of the SUP Directive and report data on fishing gear containing plastic on the market and on waste fishing gear collected in the EU Member State each year to the European Commission. This is relatively new as Danish and Swedish data were sent to the Commission for the first time in June of 2024. It seems that the process of building a European database has begun.

The Commission will, according to the SUP Directive, review the data and information reported by EU Member States and publish a report on the results of its review. **HELCOM should follow the results of this review and determine if this information could be used to improve information and statistics on the production and collection of recreational fishing gear in the Baltic area.**

According to Article 55 of the EU fisheries Control Regulation, EU Member States must have an electronic system in place to record and report catches from recreational fisheries. In addition, they need to ensure that recreational fishers are registered and that they or a legal person acting on their behalf use this electronic system for the purpose of recording and reporting catches of certain species, stocks or groups of stocks starting in 2026. EU Member States can use a system developed by the European Commission. Some countries are waiting for the Implementation Act before agreeing to adopt an electronic system. Finland and Latvia have mobile applications that can be used or adapted for reporting from fishers.

The EU has a "FishFriender" app being used as a pilot here: https://recreational-fishing.ec.europa.eu/apps

The respondents did not indicate whether their recreational fishers were registered. All HELCOM Contracting Parties should ensure that recreational fishers are registered according to the EU fisheries Control Regulation. **A HELCOM recommendation could have Contracting Parties implement a system of registering recreational fishers and that fishers are registered by an agreed upon date.**

EU and national apps and schemes need to be up and running in January 2026. National apps need to be certified for compliance. Contracting Parties could help test and evaluate the FishFriender app in collaboration with recreational fisheries organisations and observe how this is being used and whether this is a model that could work in their country. This app could be compared with existing reporting systems that only focus on lost fishing gear. These include, for example, Germany's GhostNetZero and Finland's RosGis. **HELCOM countries should follow the status of implementation of the national or EU electronic reporting**

systems for recreational fishers to record and report their catches. And at the same time consider an evaluation of whether the application can also be used to report lost fishing gear.

HELCOM could, based on this evaluation and other relevant information (f.eks. The Interreg project Re:Fish), consider the most appropriate way for recreational fishers to report lost fishing gear and make a recommendation for a common approach to this, so that data can be compiled and compared.

HELCOM could encourage Contracting Parties to communicate to fishers that the system exists and why it is important to use them, as well as what happens to the fishing gear that fishers report.

From the few responses that were received, Contracting Parties have not given the CEN Standard for circularity and recyclability of fishing gear and aquaculture equipment much consideration. The standard was only recently officially launched. **A Contracting Party could conduct a study of the most appropriate ways for HELCOM to recommend a common approach to communicating the standard or any incentives that could help to promote the voluntary use of these standards.**

The main challenges in implementation of the standard are that it is voluntary, there is a large and diverse stakeholder group, there are economical costs and resistance to change. Adaptation to the many different governmental and administrative systems in HELCOM Contracting Parties would also be challenging. Questions will also be raised as to how the standards could be integrated into effective return systems (for example at port reception facilities) and how to effectively connect and use them to further EPR requirements in the SUP Directive. HELCOM could consider if there were aspects of the standard that could be made more binding. Partnerships and agreements with other bodies (such as the EU and OSPAR could increase the chance of stronger measures being accepted.

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10. Annex

This Annex contains the measures proposed to reduce the occurrence and impacts of lost fishing gear related to the problem identified as identified in the report by IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (2023):

1. lack of awareness and knowledge about the loss of fishing gear, the environmental impacts and possible mitigation measures:

a. information signs/plaques at popular fishing sites educating fishers in e.g., local conditions;
b. efforts to educate fishers further through offering information in well-known apps related to recreational fishing;
c. requiring recreational fishers to have a license to go fishing; and
d. introducing new reporting systems and implement new legislation to make the reporting of losses mandatory for all fishers. Existing reporting systems should also be marketed more extensively.

2. Lack of incitements to reuse, recycle or recover fishing gear:

a. SUP-Directive and the upcoming EPR scheme for fishing gear;
b. introducing systems for the collection, recycling and reuse of fishing gear. With economic incitements and focus on sustainability;
c. developing recyclable fishing gear with a focus on material composition and product design;
d. take-back systems for old fishing gear in shops specialized for fishing equipment; and
e. mandatory marking and reporting of lost fishing gear, mainly focused on passive fishing gear such as fishing nets and cages.

3. Lack of easily available statistics on losses of fishing gear:

a. SUP-Directive and upcoming EPR scheme for fishing gear;
b. updated and more detailed commodity codes and PRODCOM codes connected to fishing gear; and
c. comprehensive studies focusing on national losses and estimations of lost fishing gear in each of the HELCOM-countries. In addition, increasing the understanding of lost fishing gear through analysis of materials collected at marine recycling facilities and from cleaning operations.

4. Lack of knowledge and incitements about the presence of harmful substances as well as use of environmentally friendly materials:

a. product declaration of harmful substances in all fishing gear and banning certain harmful substances in these products, including lead;
b. focus on developing more sustainable/higher quality products within low-price gear producers; and
c. information campaigns about environmentally friendly materials in targeted channels for fishers and producers/retailers.

5. Historical losses of fishing gear:

a. cleaning up historic losses through cleaning operations such as diving efforts. Possible financing through the sale of fishing licenses.