

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HELCOM GROUP ON ECOSYSTEM-BASED SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES**  
(adopted by HELCOM HOD 46-2014)

The new group will deal with fisheries in relation to the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach. Fisheries in the Baltic Sea is among the sectors having the largest environmental impact on the status of the marine environment, including its biodiversity, and The group will respond to the need to find solutions how the sector could further contribute to reaching Good Environmental Status of the Baltic Sea by 2021.

The new group will involve representatives from fisheries and environment authorities of the Baltic Sea countries, as well as EU, and HELCOM Observers and others as appropriate.

The Group will facilitate the implementation and follow-up the progress in fisheries-related actions of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and Ministerial Declarations, including the 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration. The Group will seek to recognize the interactions between fisheries and environmental conservation objectives with the view to contribute to achieving the objectives of fisheries and environment policies simultaneously.

The Group will produce and contribute, as appropriate, to relevant deliverables and milestones of the Roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach in a manner coordinated with other ongoing HELCOM processes. The group will cooperate with other subsidiary bodies i.e. on cross cutting issues, including with GEAR to the extent necessary for GEAR to ensure integration and coherence of work to reach Good Environmental Status of the marine environment across the working groups. The Group will address the outcomes of relevant HELCOM activities and projects such as coastal fish and holistic assessments, and consider the best possible ways to integrate these for the relevant discussions.

The Group will cooperate with ICES and will seek synergies with the work of BALTFISH under the EUSBSR.

It should be recognized that for the EU Member states, the European Union has exclusive competence in the matter of conservation of marine biological resources. The group should create added value, for the HELCOM countries being EU members, in relation to the work on implementation of EU legislation, taking into account the specific needs of the Baltic Sea.

The Group will meet once per year / three times per two years taking into account any window of opportunities for contributing to or interacting with other processes. The ToR of the Group will be time-limited (5 years) and could be extended upon agreement of the HoDs.

**Terms of Reference of Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries**

The duties of the Group are to:

- A. Advise the Commission in carrying out its duties under Article 20 of the Helsinki Convention, especially in relation to Articles 3, 15, 16 and 24;
- B. Provide support for the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, Ministerial Declarations and HELCOM Recommendations as well as propose strategies, guidelines and recommendations in the area of its expertise according to the existing priorities as well as requests by the Heads of Delegations and subsidiary bodies.

To fulfill these duties the Group will:

1. Facilitate the work and utilise the results of fish- and fisheries related work of HELCOM, including coastal fish network of experts (FISH-PRO II), task force on migratory fish species (FISH-M) and relevant projects;
2. Contribute to recognizing the data gaps that prevent adequately assessing human pressures on the ecosystems in cooperation with relevant bodies, thus contributing to HELCOM holistic assessments;
3. Contribute to operationalization of HELCOM fish-related core indicators from point of view of biodiversity, food webs and seafloor integrity (indicators on commercial fish are dealt with by ICES);

4. In cooperation with relevant authorities and scientific institutions, address fishing practices which have a potential negative impact on conservation goals and/or threatened or declining species and habitats, especially within coastal and marine protected areas; When doing so, take into account environmental issues and processes, such as oxygen depletion, pollution, habitat destruction, and migratory barriers which may affect the quality, abundance and distribution of fish;
5. Further develop co-operation to implement best practices with the view to achieve the established objectives of HELCOM related to migratory fish species, including the corresponding BSAP targets, and in particular taking into account the following commitments of the Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting:

*19 (B) WE AGREE to follow-up initiatives addressing salmon and sea trout restoration activities and further development and implementation, by 2015 and onwards, in co-operation with ICES, of*

- common practices for breeding, rearing and releasing salmon and sea trout as reintroductions in potential salmonid rivers;*
- investigations of needed improvements for stocking practices (e.g. biological and genetical guidelines);*
- recommendations for riverine and estuarine management and conservation measures, such as fish ways for up and down migration, restoration and protection of spawning grounds, concerning fisheries within rivers and estuaries;*
- comparable methodology for data collection through surveys, especially on recreational fisheries;*

*23 (B) WE AGREE to ask for advice from Regional Coordination Groups within the EU Data Collection Framework and ICES on how to improve data collected on such recreational fisheries, with a view to evaluate the impacts of such recreational fisheries on the marine environment;*

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6. Develop a new HELCOM Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture by 2014 to substitute the existing HELCOM Recommendation 25/4 aiming at limiting potential environmental impacts of aquaculture activities taking into account the upcoming EU guidelines for aquaculture;
7. Enhance communication and cooperation between the fisheries and environmental administrations of the HELCOM Contracting Parties as well as relevant bodies and institutions, and seek to establish stronger cooperation with ICES, BALTFISH and JBSFC, and Baltic Sea Advisory Council in order to facilitate mutually supportive agenda and maximize synergies between the different bodies.

The Group will report to the Heads of Delegation.