

Notes on the Estonian Chairmanship of HELCOM

On 30 June 2016, by Harry Liiv, Chair of HELCOM 2014-16

Estonian chairmanship in HELCOM focused on pollution management, management and planning of marine protected areas as well as on information that we use to assess the status of the sea.

During the Estonian chairmanship the Baltic Sea countries reached important milestones. HELCOM launched and has progressed on a major project to prepare the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea and the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter was adopted. One of the biggest and most difficult achievements was the HELCOM agreement to apply for a NECA status for the Baltic Sea in IMO despite the numerous socio-economic and technical constraints on the way.

Also the ban on discharges of untreated sewage from passenger ships was formalised by IMO in the spring 2016, upon joint request by the HELCOM countries to designate the Baltic Sea as a special area for this type of pollution under international law. In March 2016 the Contracting Parties for the Helsinki Convention finally adopted the long waited recommendation on sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region. HELCOM's work was also useful for the EU member states which had to update the existing river basin management plans and establish programs of measures to implement the national marine strategies.

As the HELCOM chairman I would like to congratulate all the HELCOM members our, partners and the HELCOM Secretariat on the successful completion of the Estonian chairmanship.