



Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Litter (EG Marine Litter) 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

The call for establishing this expert group has been raised through the need to (i) facilitate the implementation of the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, (ii) develop regional core indicators on marine litter and (iii) carry out regional assessments on occurrence and impacts of marine litter in the Baltic Sea.

The duties of the expert group are detailed in the following sections to be fulfilled in the period 2022-2024, in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora. Pressure Working Group will regularly revisit the progress of the work according to these ToR and will consider, together with State and Conservation Working Group, arrangements for further work beyond 2024.

Objectives and tasks

Facilitate the implementation of the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

As part of the work of the Pressure Working Group and in cooperation with Maritime Working Group and other groups as appropriate, the HELCOM EG Marine litter will:

- Provide expertise to facilitate practical implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 42-43/3. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Marine Litter will support the Lead Parties for the implementation of individual actions and provide expertise to facilitate implementation of actions with no lead.
- Seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR, the Bucharest Convention and the Barcelona Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan and Arctic Council but also other international fora, such as ICES, the UN, its specialized agencies and the EU. Contracting Parties being also EU member states will regularly coordinate with the MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter.
- Provide expert input, as may be requested by HELCOM working groups e.g. Maritime WG, on relevant measures to reduce further inputs of marine litter from sea- and land-based sources and impacts of marine litter in the HELCOM area.
- Provide expert input to the relevant action in the updated BSAP.

Monitoring and assessment

The HELCOM EG Marine Litter will act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on marine litter being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts as part of the work by State and Conservation Working Group. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Marine Litter will support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM indicators on marine litter, taking account, as appropriate, of developments on these topics under the EU MSFD for the EU member states namely:

- Further develop the HELCOM pre-core indicator on marine litter on the seafloor aiming at shifting it to core indicator.
- Further work on developing the HELCOM candidate indicator on microlitter towards core indicator.
- Consider the development and establishment of biological indicators to predict for the impacts of marine litter in the Baltic Sea area.
- Building reliable knowledge base on monitoring of microlitter in storm water, effluents of sewage treatment plants and sewage sludge applied as fertilisers in the environment.

- Improve coordinated monitoring programmes for the beach litter and seafloor litter indicators Develop a proposal of a regionally coordinated monitoring sub-programme on abundance and characteristics of micro-plastics as well as other types of anthropogenic particles constituting microlitter.
- Work on developing baselines and threshold values for maximum levels of marine litter in the Baltic Sea in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties under other relevant fora.
- Update the indicator reports at regular intervals as decided in HELCOM.
- Ensure timely and quality assured delivery of indicator based assessments of marine litter.
- Provide suggestions for regional action on monitoring of litter and micro-plastics as well as other types of anthropogenic particles constituting microlitter in rivers in order to identify sources of marine litter.

Working procedures

The expert group consists of experts nominated by Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The expert group will function as a joint expert group of Pressure WG and State and Conservation WG receiving guidance from both HELCOM working groups according to their mandates (Pressure WG overall coordination of the RAP ML; State and Conservation indicators, monitoring and assessment) and providing and receiving support from other groups, in particular Maritime WG and EG HAZ, as may be requested.

The mode of work for the expert group will be mainly via correspondence and tele-meetings, with at least one physical meeting organized annually. A Chair for the expert group will be elected. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspace dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the expert group.