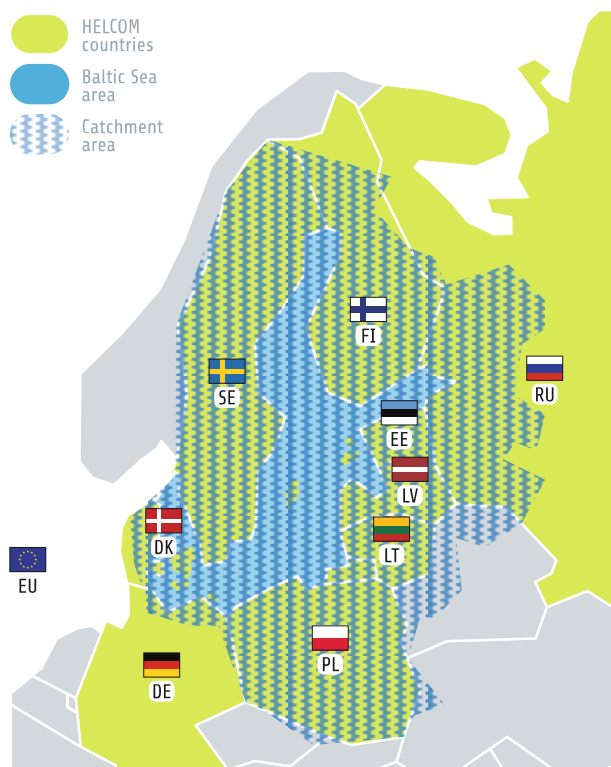


## The Helsinki Commission

The Baltic Sea countries have been working together since 1974 in the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), based in Helsinki. HELCOM members are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden and the European Union.

The chairmanship of HELCOM rotates every two years in alphabetical order among its members. Germany had the HELCOM chair from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022. The **priorities of the chairmanship** included a strengthened ocean governance in the Baltic Sea region, updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan and measures on biodiversity, climate, eutrophication, contaminants, dumped munitions, underwater noise and marine litter.







The Commission meets once a year. Between its sessions, the HELCOM members work in subordinate political and technical bodies on the protection of the Baltic Sea. It is important for us to continue the work in HELCOM for the benefit of a healthy Baltic Sea, despite current geopolitical challenges.

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**Together for a healthy  
Baltic Sea!**  
The Action Plan of the  
Helsinki Commission

For our environment

**Umwelt  
Bundesamt** 

## The Baltic Sea Action Plan

Animals and plants should be better protected and habitats be restored. Main environmental pressures in the Baltic Sea such as excess nutrients, contaminants, marine litter, underwater noise and the impacts of fishing and other activities at sea are to be further reduced.

The ten-year plan, which the environment ministers of the Baltic Sea countries and the European Union adopted in Lübeck (Germany) in 2021 (**Baltic Sea Action Plan / BSAP**), contains about 200 actions to protect the Baltic Sea. Specific programmes and strategies complement these measures. Goal: a healthy and sustainably used Baltic Sea.

This can only succeed through a stronger scientific cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. The **HELCOM Science Agenda** (2021-2030) invites scientists, funding programmes and HELCOM members to work together on closing knowledge gaps.



## Our objectives

### Effectively protect 30 % of the Baltic Sea

A third of this area should be strictly protected. The loss of biodiversity must be halted and the Baltic Sea must be made more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

### Halve marine litter on beaches by 2030

The updated **Action Plan on Marine Litter** aims to avoid plastic waste and its discharges into the Baltic Sea. Litter collection campaigns and the recovery of lost fishing nets from the sea complement these measures.

### Avoid excess nutrients in the Baltic Sea

Updated reduction requirements specify the targets for decreasing nutrient inputs. The focus of action is to reduce excess nutrients in the Baltic Sea from agriculture. The new **Nutrient Recycling Strategy** provides further impetus.

### Develop a regional action plan on contaminants

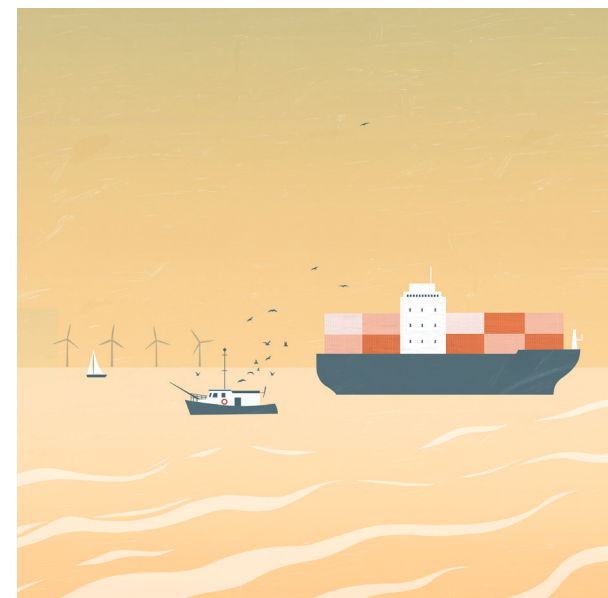
New problematic substances such as pharmaceuticals can even be found in whales and seals. Particularly relevant substances are to be identified and their inputs to the sea reduced. Measures for known problematic substances are to be consistently implemented and updated.

### Develop solutions for dumped munitions

The munitions dumped during two world wars in the Baltic Sea are estimated at 600,000 tonnes. Their risks are to be assessed and options for an environmentally sound removal and disposal are to be developed and implemented.

### Reduce noise pollution in the Baltic Sea

Underwater noise disrupts the orientation, communication and foraging of many marine animals in the Baltic Sea and can have serious impacts on them. The new **Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise** aims to close gaps in data and knowledge. The use of best available techniques should reduce future sound emissions for example from the construction of wind turbines and from ships.



### Drive forward environmentally friendly shipping

Global shipping regulations should be further advanced and their implementation regionally coordinated. The aim is to further reduce pollution from ship operations and accidents as well as climate-damaging emissions.

### Think marine and climate protection together

The **Climate Change Fact Sheet** shows how climate change is already altering the Baltic Sea ecosystems. Climate and marine protection should be reconciled in future. Ecosystems such as seagrass beds, which can bind carbon, should be strengthened for the benefit of the climate and biodiversity.

### Think globally, act regionally

The Baltic Sea Action Plan is the coordinated response of the HELCOM members to achieve the global objectives of marine protection, in particular the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on life below water, in the Baltic Sea region.