



*Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Statement of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection
Commission (Helsinki Commission – HELCOM)*

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) – is an intergovernmental organization (IGO) based on a regional sea convention in the Baltic Sea area and a regional platform for environmental policy making. It has 10 contracting Parties: Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

HELCOM was established in 1974 to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution. The HELCOM Secretariat (hereinafter: Secretariat) coordinates the work and meetings of the Helsinki Commission and ensures that the Contracting Parties meet their obligations under the Helsinki Convention. The international team is led by the Executive Secretary. Established in 1980, the Secretariat is based in Helsinki, Finland. Its status vis-à-vis the Contracting Parties is governed by the Privileges and Immunities Agreement signed between the Contracting Parties as a whole and further governed by an agreement signed between the Government of Finland and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Headquarters Agreement).

The Secretariat is committed to supporting gender equality in all aspects of its activity, i.e., employment and service provision. The employees at HELCOM represent a talented and diverse workforce. It directly employs 30 people. In September 2022 the overall staff profile was:

Gender	%	Senior management	Administration	Professional staff	Project personnel
Female	57 %	60 %	75 %	57 %	50 %
Male	43 %	40 %	25 %	29 %	50 %

HELCOM recognizes the non-binary nature of gender, but presently focuses on addressing equality between men and women and promoting the values of diversity and inclusion in the workplace for all.

HELCOM addresses gender parity to maintain equal representation of men and women among its work force. This is done via an effective recruitment and selection process¹. HELCOM maintains employment records and undertakes annual reporting to achieve and maintain gender parity.

1Recruitment and selection process

When recruiting for new talent, HELCOM will:

- Seek to recruit from as wide a talent pool as possible, and will proactively ensure that its recruitment activity is inclusive;
- Not discriminate directly or indirectly against any applicant or candidate to employment in relation to gender;
- Select candidates based on merit – ensuring the candidate with the talent, skills, competencies and experience most suited to the post is selected; however also bearing in mind the current disposition on representation of gender;
- Ensure transparency of recruitment procedures.

In advertising for roles, HELCOM will:

- Ensure that job descriptions and advertisements do not directly or indirectly exclude any potential applicant or include any unnecessary requirements that would unfairly exclude an applicant in relation to the gender equality ground;
- Ensure that advertisements reach candidates across all genders.

In the selection process HELCOM will:

- Ensure representation of both currently identified genders in the selection and interview panel;
- Ensure panel is briefed on the agreed principles of equality and diversity;
- Use an agreed and objective system of rating candidates.

Training & Organisational development

HELCOM encourages professional development and training of its staff. The annual budgets include a provision to meet the professional development needs of staff members and their interests in their career progression. Each employee has equal access to training and development opportunities regardless of gender.

Addressing the issue of unconscious biases among employees

“Harvard University’s Implicit Association Test (IAT), part of Project Implicit, is a public resource enabling individuals to better understand their own implicit biases and reflect on how those biases influence our beliefs, actions, decisions, and attitudes.

Individuals can select an IAT from a list of topics related to health and social attitudes including, but not limited to, age, race, religion, gender and employment, sexual orientation, drug and alcohol consumption, mental health, and many more.

During each IAT, which takes 10-15 minutes to complete, users will be asked to sort and categorize various images and words as well as engage with a questionnaire related to the topic. The strength of association between the various content will be measured based on

how fast the user reacts to the associations. The results of the ITA will indicate whether or not there may be an automatic preference (none, slight, moderate, strong...) or implicit bias present. These results can help us at HELCOM to reflect and understand our actions, decisions, and attitudes that could be related to discriminatory practices and ideologies.

Gender-Career IAT: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexgc.htm>

Gender-Science IAT: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Study?tid=-1>

Full list of IATs: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

An externally facilitated workshop is projected for the employees in the financial year 22/23 which will explore the subject of unconscious bias and its impact, while also understanding the benefits of greater diversity in decision-making and on productivity. The workshop participants discuss both individual and collective approaches to challenging bias, identifying strategies and practices that actively support gender equality and diversity in their workplace.

It is envisaged that annually a commitment is made in the budget preparation stage to allocate a resource to the continuity and development of an increasingly inclusive, equal, and supportive work environment which also responds to the wider societal change. Regular monitoring and learnings from trainings, wellbeing discussions, staff appraisals etc. will continue to inform us on these.

Closing remark

The Equality Statement complements HELCOM Code of Conduct initiated in 2011.

In Helsinki, 21 September 2022



Rüdiger Stempel
Executive Secretary

Annex 1 - Definitions

Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed, learned through socialization processes, context/time specific, and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context¹.

Gender equality: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development².

¹Adapted from UN Women's definition

²Adapted from UN Women's definition