



Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from Sea-based Sources (HELCOM WG Sea-based pressures)

Approved via correspondence in March 2023 by the Heads of Delegations.

Purpose

The Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from Sea-based sources (HELCOM WG Sea-based pressures) of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission works to reduce the input, impacts and risks posed by litter, disturbance and loss of the seabed, submerged hazardous objects, non-indigenous species (NIS) and level of impulsive and continuous underwater noise in the Baltic Sea. It is also tasked with monitoring the status of the Baltic Sea related to these pressures as well as implementing relevant mitigation measures. The Working Group works at the interface of science and policy and ensures that sufficient technical expertise and information are available to support national and regional decision making and implementation processes.

Duties

The duties of the Working Group are:

To advise the Commission in discharging its duties under Article 20 of the Helsinki Convention adopted at the Diplomatic Conference on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, Helsinki 9 April 1992, especially in respect of matters related to Articles 3 (“Fundamental principles and obligations”), 6 (“Principles and obligations concerning pollution from land-based sources”), 7 (“Environmental impact assessment”), 11 (“Prevention of dumping”), 12 (“Exploration and exploitation of the seabed and its subsoil”), 16 (“Reporting and exchange of information”) and 24 (“Scientific and technological cooperation”) as well as Annexes II (“Criteria for the use of Best Environmental Practice and Best Available Technology”), III (“Criteria and measures concerning the prevention of pollution from land-based sources”) and V (“Exemptions from the general prohibition of dumping of waste and other matter in the Baltic Sea Area”) to the Convention, in relation to:

- I) Addressing current and emerging issues related to litter, in particular:
 - i. to coordinate and track the implementation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in cooperation with relevant subsidiary bodies;
 - ii. to assess the need for additional measures addressing litter sources;
 - iii. to share best practices and solutions for limiting inputs of litter.

- II) Addressing current and emerging issues related to continuous and impulsive underwater noise, in particular:
 - i. to coordinate and track the implementation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise in cooperation with relevant subsidiary bodies;
 - ii. to assess the need for any additional measures addressing the input of underwater noise;
 - iii. to share best practices and solutions for minimizing inputs and impacts of underwater noise.

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- III) Addressing current and emerging issues related to seabed loss and disturbance, in particular:
- i. to coordinate the regional work on minimizing seabed loss and disturbance in cooperation with relevant subsidiary bodies;
 - ii. to support the consolidated reporting to the London Convention and its 1996 Protocol utilizing the annually reported data on handling of dredged material at sea;
 - iii. to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the measures and the need for any additional ones;
 - iv. to share best practices and solutions for reducing seabed loss and disturbance.
- IV) Addressing current and emerging issues related to the introduction and impact of NIS, in particular:
- i. to coordinate the regional work on NIS in cooperation with relevant subsidiary bodies;
 - ii. to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the measures and the need for any additional ones;
 - iii. to share best practices and solutions for minimizing the impact of NIS.
- V) Addressing current and emerging issues related to pressures and impact of submerged hazardous objects, munitions and wrecks, in particular:
- i. to coordinate the regional work on submerged hazardous objects in cooperation with relevant subsidiary bodies;
 - ii. to assess available mitigation measures and the need for additional ones;
 - iii. to share information, best practices and solutions to address the risks posed by submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea.
- VI) Addressing current and emerging issues related to individual or newly identified point sources of pollution related to the topics of the Group, in particular:
- i. to coordinate the possible designation and deletion processes of the HELCOM hot spots relevant to the Group.
- VII) Addressing emerging issues related to any other relevant sea-based pressures when the need arises.
- VIII) Identification of current and emerging issues related to impacts and effects of climate change on the topics relevant for the Group, supporting the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as tracking the level of implementation and assessing the effect of measures, in particular:
- i. to contribute to and guide the development of the Climate Change Fact Sheet and other climate change relevant work and assessments;
 - ii. to share best practices and solutions for addressing issues related to climate change and exchange information on new activities and legislation.

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- IX) Coordinating the monitoring and contributing to assessment activities of HELCOM related to the status of the marine environment with regard to litter, underwater noise, submerged hazardous objects, NIS, seabed loss and disturbance, in particular:
- i. to guide indicators development and operationalization;
 - ii. to guide development and update of monitoring guidelines and programmes as needed;
 - iii. to contribute to and guide the development of the related regional monitoring guidelines;
 - iv. to establish and ensure persistent regular data flows and management related data;
 - v. to contribute to the review and update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual for the topics relevant for pressures relevant for the Group.
- X) Cooperating with other international organizations
- i. to seek synergies with the relevant work carried out in other fora relevant for the Group such as in the European Union, other European Regional Seas Conventions, global conventions and related policies and major projects.
- XI) Supporting and guiding the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, Ministerial Declarations and HELCOM Recommendations related to the topics of the Group, including:
- i. coordinating the reporting;
 - ii. proposing strategies, guidelines and recommendations.

Expected outcomes

Expected outcomes of the work conducted in the frame of the Sea-based Pressures Working Group are detailed in the 2-year workplan of the Group, regularly updated by the Group and approved by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

Organization of work

The Sea-based Pressures Working Group consists of experts from Contracting Parties and is open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Delegations from Contracting Parties as well as Observers will identify a lead of delegation who will approve the nominations of the delegation they belong to. Leads of delegations will also approve meeting participants from their delegation. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings by the HELCOM Secretariat in consultation with the Chair.

Within HELCOM, the Group will seek synergies and cooperate with relevant Working Groups, especially with regards to highly interconnected topics. The Working Group will cooperate with the GEAR Working Group with regards to horizontal topics which span the remit of several HELCOM bodies.

The Sea-based Pressures Working Group will hold one physical and one online meeting per year. Extraordinary intersessional online meetings should only take place if an urgent need arises. In the physical meetings, the Contracting Parties shall ensure that at least the lead of a delegation or another delegate with the mandate to negotiate attends the meetings physically.

The work of the Sea-based Pressures Working Group will be supported by expert groups. The Working Group guides and approves the work of a number of Expert Groups working with topics under the Working Groups remit, including but not limited to input, impacts and risks posed by litter, disturbance and loss of the seabed, submerged hazardous objects, NIS and level of impulsive and continuous underwater noise. The Working Group has the possibility to propose the establishment of additional Expert Groups as needed to progress

work. The establishment of any new Expert Groups is to be approved by Heads of Delegation. The workplan of expert groups will be revised and approved by the Sea-based Pressures Working Group.

The Sea-based Pressures Working Group will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for a 2-year mandate period. The maximum mandate period for a Working Group Chair should be three consecutive mandate periods, consisting of 2 years per period, resulting in a maximum consecutive mandate period of 6 years.

The current Terms of Reference are to be reviewed periodically, every four years, or as the need arises.

The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Group.

The Sea-based Pressures Working Group reports to the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

The updated (2023) HELCOM organigram is available [here](#) on the HELCOM website.