



## Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Working Group on the Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices (HELCOM WG Source to sea)

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

### Purpose

The Working Group on Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices (HELCOM WG Source to sea) of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission works towards reducing the pressures on the marine environment, primarily inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances to the Baltic Sea, to monitor the progress towards reaching the goal of Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication and hazardous substances as well as to implement relevant mitigation measures.

The Working Group also works to find solutions how the agricultural sector could further contribute to reaching good environmental status of the Baltic Sea and the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach. The group provides a platform for identifying and sharing information on agri-environmental policy measures and instruments and joint discussion on the Baltic agriculture in the context of the protection of the marine environment, in order to address nutrient inputs and emissions from agriculture. It should be recognized that for the EU Member states, the European Union has exclusive competence in the matter of agriculture policy. The Group should create added value, for the HELCOM countries being EU members, in relation to the work on implementation of EU legislation, taking into account the specific needs of the Baltic Sea.

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”), 5 (“Harmful substances”), 6 (“Principles and obligations concerning pollution from land-based sources”), 7 (“Environmental impact assessment”), 13 (“Notification and consultation on pollution incidents”), 16 (“Reporting and exchange of information”), 24 (“Scientific and technological cooperation”), as well as Annexes I (“Harmful substances”), II (“Criteria for the use of Best Environmental Practice and Best Available Technology”) and III (“Criteria and measures concerning the prevention of pollution from land-based sources”) to the Convention, in relation to:

- I) Addressing current and emerging issues related to the inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances in the marine environment, in particular:
  - i. to keep track of major processes addressing land-based nutrient input from diffuse (for load compilation) and point sources, identify and prioritize needs for further reduction of nutrient emissions and inputs and propose new initiatives to close identified gaps;

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- ii. to keep track of major processes addressing land-based input of hazardous substances from diffuse and point sources, identify and prioritize needs for further reduction of emissions and inputs of hazardous substances and propose new initiatives to close identified gaps;
  - iii. to cooperate to address nutrient emissions and inputs from non-Contracting Parties to meet the expected reductions according to the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme, e.g. in relation to the Gothenburg Protocol under the UN ECE CLRTAP as well as EU NECD, the work of river basin management commissions/bodies.
- II) Addressing current and emerging issues related to pressures and environmental impacts from agriculture, in particular:
- i. to coordinate and track the implementation of the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy;
  - ii. to contribute to assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the measures and the need for any additional measures, including supporting the deletion of the remaining agricultural hot spots from the list of the Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme;
  - iii. to share best practices and solutions for limiting emissions and losses of nutrients and hazardous substances from agriculture and exchange information on new activities and legislation;
- III) Addressing changes in the marine environment, in particular:
- i. to coordinate assessments of eutrophication and hazardous substances;
  - ii. to follow progress toward GES with respect to eutrophication and hazardous substances contamination in the marine environment;
  - iii. to link change in the marine environment to pressures and environmental drivers (e.g. climate change).
- IV) Developing and reviewing reduction strategies, in particular:
- i. to support the review of the nutrient input reduction scheme based on the best available scientific knowledge in cooperation with other relevant subsidiary bodies as well as institutes and modelling centres, as may be necessary;
  - ii. to develop and update the strategic approach and action plan for hazardous substances.
- V) Identification of measures to reduce inputs and assessment of effects and effectiveness of measures, in particular:
- i. to share best practices and solutions for limiting emissions and losses of nutrients from existing sources including agriculture and exchange information on legislation and new activities;
  - ii. to maintain a system to evaluate progress by the Contracting Parties in fulfilling their national nutrient input ceilings of the HELCOM nutrient reductions scheme, track the progress and prepare reports and recommendations for improved implementation;
  - iii. to share best practices and solutions for limiting emissions and losses of hazardous substances from existing sources including agriculture and exchange information on legislation and regarding activities concerning new and emerging substances;
  - iv. to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the measures and the need for any additional ones, including in relation to remaining nutrients and hazardous substances hot spots from the list of the Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme;
  - v. to coordinate the possible designation and deletion processes of the new HELCOM hot spots relevant to the Group;
  - vi. to evaluate the impacts of measures to manage the internal nutrient reserves.
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- VI) Identification of current and emerging issues related to impacts and effects of climate change on management of nutrients, hazardous substances and on agriculture, 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.
- VII) Coordinating the monitoring of the status of the marine environment with regard to eutrophication and hazardous substances and inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances as well as developing methods and tools for improved monitoring and dataflow, in particular:
- i. to guide Pollution Load Compilations (PLCs) (Water, and Air in cooperation with EMEP) and continuous work on improving data reporting and quality, developing databases as well as preparing assessment reports meeting policy needs;
  - ii. to guide indicator development and operationalization related to eutrophication and hazardous substances;
  - iii. to contribute to and guide the development of eutrophication and hazardous substances related regional monitoring guidelines;
  - iv. to establish and ensure persistent regular data flows and management on nutrients, eutrophication and hazardous substances data;
  - v. to contribute to the review and update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual for the topics relevant for the Group.
- VIII) 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.
- IX) Supporting and guiding the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, Ministerial Declarations and HELCOM Recommendations related to eutrophication, hazardous substances and agriculture, including:
- i. coordinating the reporting;
  - ii. proposing strategies, guidelines and recommendations in the area of its expertise.

### Expected outcomes

Expected outcomes of the work conducted in the frame of the Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices Working Group are detailed in the 2-year workplan of the Working Group, regularly updated by the Working Group and approved by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

### Organization of work

The Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices Working Group consists of eutrophication/nutrients, hazardous substances and sustainable agriculture 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.

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

The Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices 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 Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices Working Group will elect Chair and Vice-Chair for a 2-year mandate period, one of which has specific responsibility for matters related to sustainable agricultural practices within the group. 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 work of the Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices will be supported by expert groups. The Working Group guides and approves the work of expert groups working with topics under the Working Group's remit. 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 group is to be approved by Heads of Delegation. The workplan of expert groups will be revised and approved by the Source to sea Working Group.

The present 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 working group.

The Source to Sea Management of Nutrients and Hazardous Substances and Sustainable Agricultural Practices Working Group reports to the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.

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