



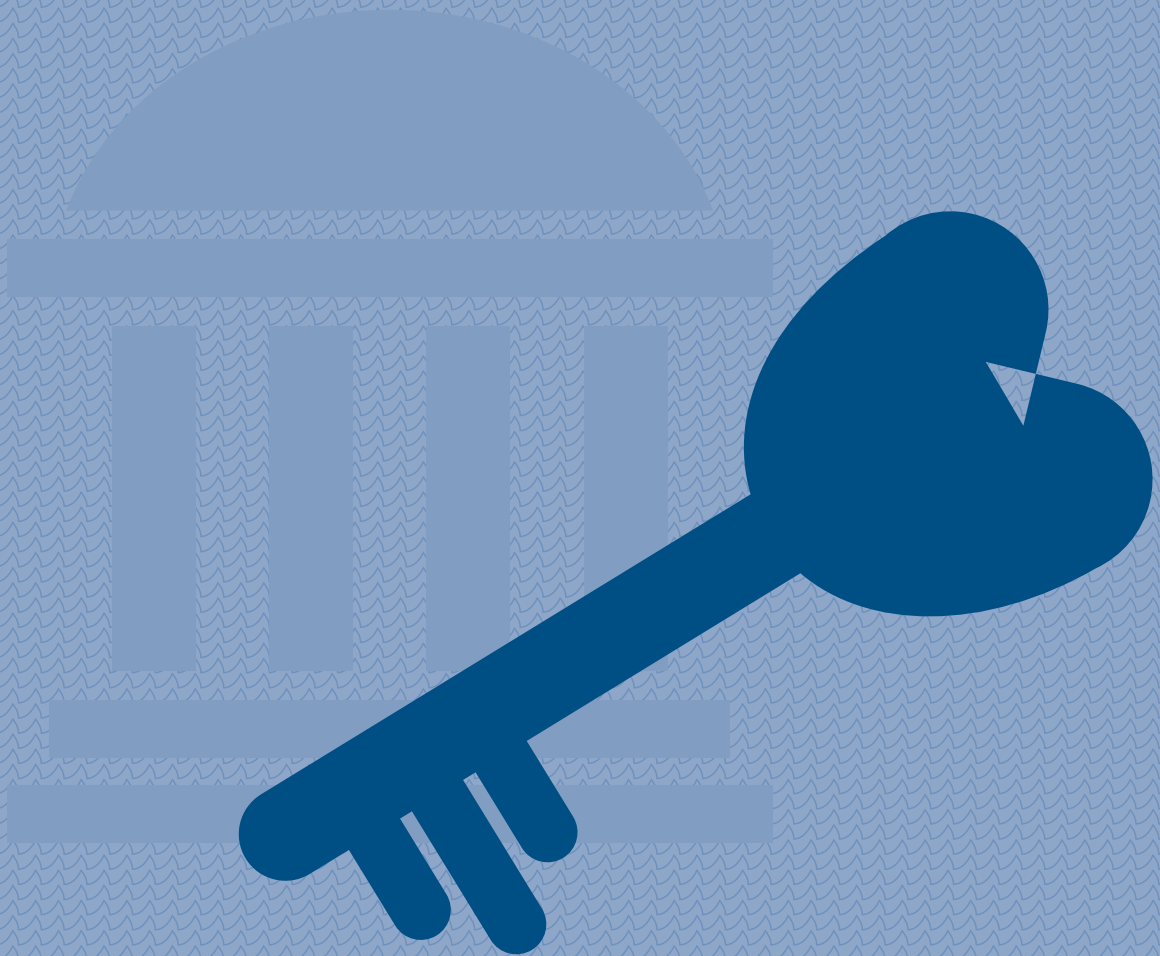
HELCOM Chairmanship

Baltic Marine Environment
Protection Commission

In brief



2024





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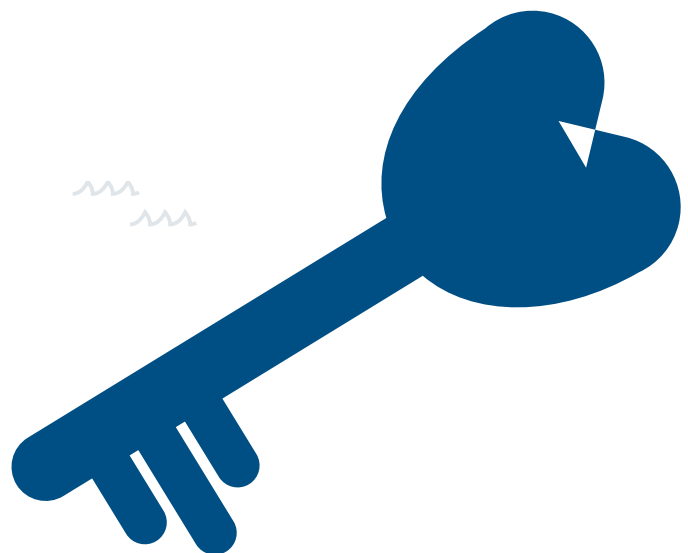


Introduction

The Chairmanship of the Baltic Marine Environment Commission – also known as the Helsinki Commission or HELCOM – rotates between the ten Contracting Parties every two years, starting on 1 July, according to their alphabetical order in English.

The chairing Contracting Party designates a Chairperson (Chair) and, if deemed necessary, one or more Vice-Chairperson(s). The nomination of a Vice-Chair is conducive to ensuring that the chairing Contracting Party can fulfil its role even in the absence of the designated Chair. Moreover, the Contracting Party holding the HELCOM Chairmanship usually sets strategic priorities for its two-year tenure. It generally also hosts the Ministerial Meeting scheduled to take place during its chairmanship.

Overall, the Chairmanship endows the Contracting Party concerned with a crucial role in shaping HELCOM policy and ensuring progress in fulfilling and progressing the HELCOM agenda during its Chairmanship.





The role of the Chair

Rule 2 of the [HELCOM Rules of Procedure](#) reads as follows:



Rule 2

CHAIRMAN

- 2.1. The chairmanship of the Commission shall be given to each Contracting Party in turn in alphabetical order of the names of Contracting Parties in the English language.
- 2.2. The Contracting Party chairing the Commission shall nominate the Chairman and a ViceChairman six months in advance. If the Chairman finds it necessary to be absent during any meeting or any part thereof and/or is unable to perform his/her functions the ViceChairman shall take his/her place.
- 2.3. The Chairman shall serve for a period of two years, and cannot during the period of his/her chairmanship serve as representative of his/her country.
- 2.4. Should the chairmanship fall vacant, the Contracting Party chairing the Commission shall nominate a successor to remain in office until the term of chairmanship of that Contracting Party expires.
- 2.5. In addition to exercising the powers and duties conferred upon him/her elsewhere in these Rules the powers and duties of the Chairman shall be:
 - to convene the regular and extraordinary meetings of the Commission and of the Heads of Delegation;
 - to declare the opening and closing of these meetings;
 - to preside at all meetings of the Commission and of the Heads of Delegation;
 - to ensure observance of these Rules and to decide all questions of order raised at meetings of the Commission and of the Heads of Delegation, subject to the right of any representative to request that any ruling by the Chairman shall be submitted to the Commission for decision by vote;
 - generally, to make such decisions and give such guidance to the Executive Secretary as will ensure that the business of the Commission is carried out efficiently and in accordance with its decisions.





In practice, this means that the Chair exercises a variety of functions that are key to the smooth operation of HELCOM. It should be noted that the Chairs do not act as representatives of their countries but represent the interests of HELCOM as a whole.

The Chair convenes and presides over the meetings of the Helsinki Commission and the Heads of Delegation (HODs) and ensures observance of the Rules of Procedure by the Contracting Parties and decides on all points of order. A central task of the Chair is also to prepare the regular meetings (e.g. annual meeting of the Commission and HOD agendas) as well as to consult on matters of major importance to HELCOM work, to facilitate progress and work towards resolving critical issues.

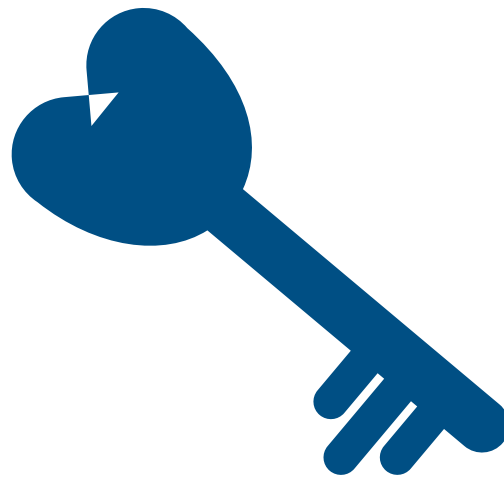
The regular meetings to be chaired by the Chair are the annual meeting of the Helsinki Commission (to be held no later than 1 May of a given year, normally in the Helsinki region) and two meetings of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation per year (usually online in June and physically in Helsinki towards the end of the year). It has become customary (but is not mandatory) that the chairing Party extends an invitation to host one of the HOD meetings in its capital upon assuming the Chairmanship. The invitation is normally communicated at the beginning of the Contracting Party's Chairmanship. When preparing for a Ministerial Meeting or under special circumstances, the number of HOD meetings may increase. Information on HELCOM meetings and meeting documents can be found in the HELCOM Meeting Portal. Preparatory meetings between the Chair (and Vice-Chair) and relevant Secretariat staff are held prior to the annual meetings of the Commission and the HOD meetings. The Secretariat prepares notes for the Chair(s) for each meeting, which work as a script to assist the Chair in leading the discussions at the meeting.

In addition to chairing these meetings, the Chair also assumes representative tasks, such as speaking on behalf of HELCOM at various conferences, seminars, meetings and other internal and external events, as well as to the media. In practice, approximately 1-3 relevant invitations of this kind may be expected per year. The Chair is free to decide whether to accept the invitations or not and may also request the Executive Secretary to substitute for him/her in meeting these requests. In the event of related travel, the chairing Contracting Party covers the travel costs of the Chair, as the Secretariat does not have a budget for this purpose.

As per Rule 3.1 and Rule 3.2 of the Staff Regulations for the Professional staff of the Helsinki Commission, the Chairperson is also an ex officio member of the Executive Secretary and the Professional Secretaries of the HELCOM Secretariat.

A further function of the Chair, as a representative of the interests of HELCOM as a whole, may also be to provide advice or guidance on policy or institutional matters of relevance to the organization to the Executive Secretary upon request.

In exercising their functions under HELCOM, the Chairs cooperate with and are supported by the HELCOM Secretariat, especially the Executive Secretary.





Ministerial Meetings

HELCOM Ministerial meetings are customarily hosted by the Contracting Party holding the chairmanship at the time of the meeting. Ministerial-level meetings are held at least every three years, unless the Contracting Parties decide otherwise. Political support is crucial for HELCOM and Contracting Parties in their continuous efforts to protect the Baltic Sea, and the Ministerial Meetings are important forums for shared high-level discussions and agreements. They are generally half-day to one-day events.





Resources

- HELCOM webpage: <https://helcom.fi/>
- Chairmanship: <https://helcom.fi/about-us/chairmanship/>
- Helsinki Convention: <https://helcom.fi/about-us/convention/>
- Internal rules: <https://helcom.fi/about-us/internal-rules/>
 - Rules of procedure
 - Financial rules
 - Staff rules
- 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)
- Third holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS 3)
- HELCOM Meeting Portal: <https://meetings.helcom.fi/>
 - Upcoming meetings
 - Past meetings since April 2023
 - Archive 2014-March 2023
 - HELCOM Groups and members

