



Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Hazardous Substances (EG Haz)

Approved by the HELCOM Source to Sea Working Group via correspondence in November 2024.

Purpose

The purpose of the group is to facilitate and further develop the coordination of regional work on hazardous substances, in support of the implementation of the [Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) (as updated in 2021) and its relevant goals ('Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter') and subsequent commitments. This relates in particular to the following BSAP ecological objectives:

- Marine life is healthy;
- Concentrations of hazardous substances are close to natural levels;
- All sea food is safe to eat.

Further, the Group is a platform for exchange of experiences as well as harmonization of methods concerning the work with hazardous substances, indicators and integrated assessments.

Duties

The duties of the group are to:

Strategic approach and measures

- Ensure a holistic perspective to HELCOM work on hazardous substances according to the agreed strategic approach;
- Lead and support the implementation of actions on hazardous substances stemming from the Baltic Sea Action Plan, subsequent Ministerial Declarations as well as the HELCOM Action Plan on Hazardous Substances;
- Review the HELCOM List of Priority Substances according to the agreed timelines incorporating regular regional screening (target and non-target), and nationally/internationally derived information, into the review process;

Monitoring

- Revise, if need arises, existing monitoring guidelines, or develop new ones, to ensure all relevant parameters for successful indicator assessments is included;

Indicators

- Support Lead and Co-Lead Countries in development of HELCOM indicators on hazardous substances, review threshold values and methodological requirements in line with new developments as well as propose new indicators of relevance to the region to address emerging issues or substances;

Assessment

- Advice and support the development of the assessment on inputs of hazardous substances in the HELCOM Pollution Load Compilation (PLC) projects;

- Ensure timely and quality assured delivery of indicator-based assessments of hazardous substances, including integrated assessments as well as support and validate the development of the hazardous substances tools for the automated calculation of HELCOM hazardous substances assessments;

Cooperation

- Cooperate with HELCOM groups related to land- and sea-based sources and pathways of hazardous substances as well as effects of hazardous substances on biodiversity to promote a holistic approach to hazardous substances;
- Cooperate with relevant regional and international fora to bring information from and to regional and global processes.

Expected outputs

Expected outcomes of the work conducted in the frame of the Expert Group on Hazardous Substances are detailed in the 2-year workplan of the Expert Group, regularly updated by the Group and approved by the Source to Sea Working Group.

Organization of work

The group will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures.

The group will report to and receive guidance from the Source to Sea Working Group.

The Expert Group will elect a Chair or co-Chairs for the group for a 2-year term.

The mode of work for the expert Group will be mainly via correspondence and online meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed.

To strengthen the development on specific topics voluntary 'sub-teams' within the Expert Group will be established.

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 meetings, documents and products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this purpose.