



## Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Places of Refuge (EG PoR) 2025-2028

*Approved via correspondence in January 2025 by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation.*

### Purpose

The Regulation 12 on places of refuge of annex IV of the Helsinki Convention states that the Contracting Parties

- a) shall, following-up the work of EC and IMO, draw up plans to accommodate, in the waters under their jurisdiction, ships in distress in order to ensure that ships in distress may immediately go to a place of refuge subject to authorisation by the competent authority; and
- b) shall exchange details on plans for accommodating ships in distress.

In 2014 the Contracting Parties adopted the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 31E/5 on Mutual Plan for Places of Refuge in the Baltic Sea Area. It recommends the Contracting States to co-operate when providing a Place of Refuge for a ship in need of assistance in order to avoid unnecessary risk for the ship and the environment. Furthermore, it recommends to ensure that upon request by one Contracting State (Requesting Party) a neighbouring Contracting State (Requested Party) will consider accommodating a ship in need of assistance in its waters even if an incident involving such a ship started outside its response zone.

### Duties

The overall aim of EG PoR is to create a professional forum that collects and shares knowledge and contributes to enhancing the procedures related to granting a place of refuge by information sharing and by developing joint procedures.

The Expert Group has the following tasks:

1. Making sure, that the Recommendation 31E/5 is kept up to date.
2. Advising HELCOM Response on Places of Refuge matters.
3. Preparing a draft chapter to the Response manual on Places of Refuge.
4. Sharing experiences on Places of Refuge situations.
5. Developing best practises related to Places of Refuge.
6. Enhancing the mutual knowledge of the Places of Refuge.
7. Promote nationally as well as internationally the inclusion of Places of Refuge element to response exercises or as a thematic exercise.
8. Sharing information on claims management issues related to the Places of Refuge cases.
9. Following developments on work related to Places of Refuge in other organizations, e.g. IMO

### Organization of work

The EG PoR will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to organizations which have HELCOM observer status. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The Expert Group will cater for cross-sectorial expertise to carry out the tasks as needed.

The EG PoR works under the supervision of, reports to and receives guidance from the HELCOM Response Working Group.

The mode of work for the Expert Group will be mainly via correspondence and one to two online meetings a year, with physical meetings being organized if needed and exercises if decided. Chair for the Expert Group will be elected at the first meeting after approval of the Terms of Reference.

The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Expert Group. The Expert Group is settled for a period of four years. Prolongation of the mandate for the Expert Group should be considered at the end of the working period based on identified needs.