



# Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on dredging/depositing operations at sea (EG DREDS) 2025-2027

*Approved via correspondence by WG Sea-based Pressure in June 2025*

## Purpose

Depositing of dredged material is one of the pressures that is to be considered within the holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. The HELCOM Spatial Pressure and Impact Assessment (SPIA), which is used for the assessments, reflects the spatial distribution of human induced pressures and impacts on different ecosystem components, including benthic species and biotopes. Dredging/depositing operations is one of the human activities which impacts the ecosystem components.

HELCOM Recommendation 36/2 on *Management of dredged material*, adopted by HELCOM 36-2015 on 4 March 2015 and amended by HELCOM 41-2020 on 5 March 2020, recommends that the Contracting Parties follow the HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea and that the Contracting Parties report on the national data on management of dredged material according to the Reporting Format of the HELCOM Guidelines.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) of the European Union included seafloor integrity into the list of descriptors for determining good environmental status. The MSFD also identified the physical loss and physical disturbance to the sea-floor and human activities which may be caused by e.g. dredging/disposal of dredged material; impact on the seabed of commercial fishing, boating, anchoring; exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources on seabed and subsoil.

The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021 adopted the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), including the objectives “Activities affecting seabed habitats do not threaten the viability of species’ populations and communities” and “Minimize input and impact of hazardous substances from human activities.”. Under the “Hazardous substances and litter” segment and the “Sea-based activities” segments of the BSAP, HELCOM Contracting Parties committed to concrete actions to achieve the objectives.

## Duties

The HELCOM Expert Group on dredging and subsequent depositing operations at sea (hereinafter – EG Dreds):

- supports reporting and validation of data on dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- facilitates the work of the HELCOM Sea-based pressures Working Group in terms of assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- considers and provides expert input to all relevant actions in the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP); and follows up the implementation of respective actions in the BSAP.
- cooperates with other relevant HELCOM Expert Groups, such as the Expert Group on Benthic Habitats and Biotopes (EG Benthic), to ensure the consistency of data and the full expertise of EG Dreds are utilized in their work.

## Expected outputs

Expected outcomes of the work conducted in the frame of the HELCOM Expert Group on dredging/depositing operations at sea are detailed in the 2-year workplan of the Expert Group, regularly updated by the Group and approved by the Sea-based Pressures Working Group.

## Organization of work

EG DreDs will report to The Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from Sea-based sources (HELCOM WG Sea-based pressures) and will assist other subsidiary bodies and projects of HELCOM with requested information.

The Contracting Parties are to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group, and the work will rely on expert participation and contribution of the Contracting Parties.

EG DreDs will meet as often as necessary and will utilise online meetings as the major working method, though physical meetings are possible, if appropriate as agreed by the Sea-based pressures Working Group.

The Secretariat will provide administrative support during the meetings. EG DreDs will record the outcomes of the meetings in form of short memos.

EG DreDs will identify tasks that may require additional resources or are long-term tasks and may come up with proposals for projects.

The mandate of HELCOM EG DreDs is prolonged from 2025 until the end of 2027.