



Document title	Screening study on hazardous substances in marine mammals
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*Note that this document was submitted after the established deadline.
It will be decided by the Meeting whether the document can be discussed or is postponed to the next meeting.*

Background

One priority under the German Chairmanship of HELCOM (1 July 2020 - 30 June 2022) is strengthening marine biodiversity. Marine biodiversity in the Baltic Sea has been subject to anthropogenic impairments. Regarding marine mammals, contaminant pollution is of concern for the Baltic Sea. For example, reduced fertility of seals and population decline of seal species has been attributed to high levels of organochlorines such as DDT and PCBs. It is planned to screen marine mammals' tissue for concentration of pollutants and link it to the state of their health. As top predators in the food webs of the Baltic Sea, the state of their health needs to be enhanced to ensure their conservation.

Screening study on hazardous substances in marine mammals

Germany plans to conduct a non-target and target screening study on hazardous substances in samples of marine mammals' tissue starting in early 2021. The screening would be comparable to the [LIFE APEX project](#). Results of this study will be used as basis for further work regarding assessment of contaminant pollution of marine mammals in the Baltic Sea and health status of marine mammals.

To ensure a sound, comparable, and up to date data basis on contaminants in marine mammals with a good spatial coverage of the Baltic Sea area, cooperation with HELCOM contracting parties is striven for. It is expected that two samples per Helcom contracting parties can be analyzed within the project. The kind of samples (species, tissue, quality of material) is not determined yet and will be defined according to availability and feedback from contracting parties. The aim of this information document is to start discussion and expert exchange about the project idea and further cooperation. There will be no costs for participating contracting parties.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- take note of the information about the planned screening project on hazardous substances in marine mammals by Germany;
- discuss and provide feedback on the planned project for example availability of appropriate samples, kind of matrix and choice of marine mammal species;

- to provide contact persons to further discuss and organize selection, collection, preparation, and transport of samples.