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## Background

The [ACTION project](#) (ACTIONS TO EVALUATE AND IDENTIFY EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO REACH GES IN THE BALTIC SEA MARINE REGION), is a HELCOM lead and EU co-funded project that will support the work associated with the HELCOM SOM Platform and the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP UP). The project inception report, detailing the planned work and methodologies is available at [this link](#).

Certain aspects of hazardous substances are addressed in a subsection within work package 5 (WP5). In WP5 current knowledge on natural conditions that influence the recovery of the Baltic Sea towards GES will be explored, including how projected future changes in climate will affect the effectiveness of measures taken to improve the Baltic Sea environmental state. Related topics were also discussed at the HELCOM Sufficiency of Measures Platform (SOM Platform) kick-off event, as found in the [meeting notes annex](#).

The main aims are to:

1. Elucidate common features and those aspects most widely perceived as causing the failure to meet GES.
2. Identify gaps or delays in achieving GES due to natural conditions and possible effects of climatic changes.
3. Identify relevant hazardous substances most likely to prevent GES being achieved and the reasons for this.
4. Identify any viable new measures that could counteract the extended delay in reaching GES.

So far a number of preliminary issues have been identified, including:

1. Hg is a global issue – major inputs due to atmospheric deposition and have origin outside of the Baltic Sea region.
2. Redistribution due to elevated rainfall - Increased rainfall predictions due to climate change may result in increased input from terrestrial or point sources.
3. Physical disturbance - increased rainfall and human activities (e.g. dredging) may redistribute historic deposits (e.g. Hg-rich fibre banks or copper), particularly in shallow or coastal areas.
4. Persistence of TBT in sediments - breakdown is very slow despite general decrease in use/inputs.
5. Radioactive substances – these have a natural half-life and could prevent GES being reached in some areas.
6. Temperature, terrestrial inputs and eutrophication – these factors can influence microbial processes and thus Hg methylation dynamics and the bioavailability of Hg.
7. Re-emergence of known contaminants -
8. Confounding issues – multiple stressors impacting on GES failure.

Further suggestions or guidance from the Expert Network on Hazardous Substances would be warmly welcomed at this early stage of the project.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the information provided.
- provide any guidance or information to the ACTION project on important substances, aspects, or topics that may be pertinent to consider.