



Document title	Proposal to establish a HELCOM intersessional expert network on eutrophication
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Background

With the finalization of the HELCOM EUTRO-OPER project by end of 2015, there are currently no immediate plans for any project activity to continue the work on eutrophication assessments in HELCOM. Still, eutrophication core indicator reports will require regular updates and an updated thematic assessment of eutrophication is needed for the production of the 2nd Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II project).

The EUTRO-OPER project proposed to continue HELCOM work related to eutrophication after the end of of the project and Terms of Reference for such a network has been drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with EUTRO-OPER (EUTRO-OPER 6-2015, para 4.2).

State and Conservation 3-2015 supported in principle the establishment of such network and the draft ToR, noting the following statement by Germany: “that she is very well aware that the work on eutrophication indicators is very important and has to proceed within the HELCOM framework. The draft ToR for the proposed network comprise the relevant tasks and working steps, but Germany has some doubts that such a network which would primarily work intersessionally would be the right body to fulfil all the tasks listed. Therefore, Germany suggests a prolongation of the EUTRO-OPER project for three to six months, and will propose this at the next HOD meeting. However, if HOD cannot endorse a prolongation of EUTRO-OPER, Germany supports the expert network approach and the ToR as well”.

This document contains draft ToR for the continuation of HELCOM work on eutrophication through the establishment of an HELCOM intersessional network on eutrophication.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider the establishment of a HELCOM intersessional network on eutrophication, and if appropriate
- agree on the ToRs for the intersessional network on eutrophication.

Proposal for establishment of intersessional network on eutrophication

The HELCOM EUTRO and EUTRO-PRO projects on developing an eutrophication assessment, TARGREV project on eutrophication target setting, CORE EUTRO process on core eutrophication indicators and assessment, as well as the MORE project on monitoring revision, have delivered during 2010-2014 the basic components for an operational regional monitoring and assessment of eutrophication. The components include an agreement on quantitative definitions of Good Environmental Status for core parameters that are to be monitoring and addressed by indicators.

The HELCOM EUTRO-OPER has continued to operationalize the production of regional assessments of eutrophication for the Baltic Sea, aiming toward a documented and structured process to be made available as an eutrophication assessment manual. The developed structure is able to serve the needs of HELCOM in updating indicators and thematic assessments, serving the holistic assessment as well as the needs of the MSFD for Contracting Parties being EU Member States. Though the process is partly automatized, it is dependent of expert supervision.

Terms of reference for HELCOM Intersessional network on eutrophication

The duties of the expert network are to:

- Update core indicator reports and eutrophication assessments at intervals as decided in HELCOM. This includes regular review of the data and assessment products;
- Update the eutrophication assessment manual developed by EUTRO-OPER at regular intervals;
- Have responsibility for QA/QC guidance of the full eutrophication assessment process from monitoring to assessment products;
- Further development of the eutrophication assessment methodology, including regular scientific review of the agreed GES boundaries.

To fulfill these duties the expert network will in the period 2016-2018:

- Ensure the quality of updated data products, provide reports for core indicators and carry out an eutrophication assessment by early 2017, or as otherwise agreed by the HOLAS II project;
- Ensure the quality of updated data products, provide reports for core indicators and carry out an eutrophication assessment by early 2018, or as otherwise agreed by the HOLAS II project;
- Finalize the eutrophication pre-core indicators developed under EUTRO-OPER: total nitrogen, total phosphorus, spring bloom chlorophyll-*a* and cyanobacterial bloom indicators;
- Continue the integration of coastal and open-sea assessments

The network will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. The network will report to and receive guidance from State and Conservation Working Group.

The mode of work for the expert network will be mainly via correspondence and on-line meetings facilitated by the Secretariat, with physical meetings being organized as needed. A Chair for the network will be elected. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated for the aim. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the network.

Expected results

The network will initiate and carry out regular assessments of eutrophication for the Baltic Sea, at intervals decided in HELCOM. It will continue the cooperation between HELCOM and ICES to maintain the full process that leads from data to assessment products. The network will ensure the high quality of the assessment tools and methodology.