



Document title	Draft outline Joint HELCOM/Baltic Earth Stakeholder Conference 2022 on Climate Change
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Agenda Item	4 - Preparation for HELCOM 43-2022 including the Stakeholder Conference
Submission date	17.11.2021
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	Outcome of HOD 60-2021, paragraph 2.6

Background

The next HELCOM Stakeholder Conference will be centred around the theme of climate change in the Baltic Sea, and will be held online on 9-10 March 2022, in conjunction with Baltic Earth and Germany (in its current capacity of chair of HELCOM).

The conference will showcase the publication of the [HELCOM/Baltic Earth Climate Change Fact Sheet](#). It will also focus on the measures and actions related to climate change in the updated HELCOM [Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) (BSAP), with a view to promoting their implementation. The conference will also consider the outcomes of the HELCOM Workshop on Blue Carbon (online, 17-18 November 2021).

The event's online format is not only due to the uncertainties regarding COVID-related restrictions, but also intended to limit travel-related GHG emissions, in line with the BSAP's specific action on HELCOM meetings (HT03).

The outcomes of the HSC2022 will be presented at HOD 62-2022.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to comment on the outline of the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference on climate change in the Baltic Sea region 2022 (HSC2022), to be held online on 9-10 March 2022, in cooperation with Baltic Earth and Germany.

Draft outline Joint HELCOM/Baltic Earth Stakeholder Conference 2022 on Climate Change

(v5 – 8 November 2021)

Core issues

The effects of climate change are already evident in the Baltic Sea. However, they are often not easy to understand and can be difficult to distinguish from other anthropogenic pressures. Both climate change and other human-induced pressures vary significantly between different regions in the Baltic Sea, ruling out simple management solutions and a one-size-fits-all approach that could be applied across the entire region.

In addition, and even though climate change has become a priority within HELCOM and its Contracting Parties for some time now, the topic is not being comprehensively addressed. The need for additional information on climate change is real, especially when it comes to the development of adequate policies and mitigation or adaptation measures, and their sound implementation.

With regard to climate change, the ultimate aim of HELCOM is to increase the resilience of the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea to its impacts. All measures that lead to greater Baltic marine ecosystem resilience should therefore also be regarded as climate adaptation measures. In order to tackle the climate change issue in the most holistic manner, HELCOM also focuses on long-term, multi-disciplinary approaches.

The 2022 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference (HSC2022) is therefore part of HELCOM's efforts to disseminate knowledge on the regional effects of climate change and will also allow us to gather fresh views on climate change mitigation and adaptation from policy makers and all other stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region. This will back the development of strong responses to climate change at the pan-Baltic level, and support the implementation of existing commitments on climate change at both the global and regional levels, such as for instance those contained in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action plan ([BSAP](#)), the [European Climate Law](#), the [SDG 13 on climate change](#) or those under the various [UNFCCC instruments](#).

Scientific background

The recently published HELCOM/Baltic Earth [Climate Change Fact Sheet](#) (CCFS) provides recent, concise and peer reviewed information on the influencing factors and indirect effects of climate change on the Baltic Sea. In addition, Baltic Earth recently reassessed the status of the Baltic Sea with regard to climate change (Baltic Earth Assessment Report on Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region (Meier *et al.*, 2021)).

Mandate

HOD 60-2021 (in June 2021) approved organizing the conference (c.f. paragraphs 2.6-2.8 of the [Outcome](#) and [document 2-2](#)). In addition to considering the broader issues related to climate change in the Baltic Sea, including the presentation of the joint HELCOM/Baltic Earth Climate Change Factsheet, HOD 60-2021 also requested to focus on the implementation of the relevant actions contained in the updated BSAP that are related to climate change.

Furthermore, during the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021, the HELCOM Ministers agreed to include “global issues like climate change [...] into our agenda”, as stated in the [HELCOM Ministerial Declaration 2021](#). In the preamble of the [updated BSAP](#), the HELCOM Ministers also emphasized “the need for continued research and adaptive management to mitigate the effects and strengthen the resilience of the Baltic Sea to climate change by reducing other human pressures on the ecosystems,” underscored “the need to further adapt HELCOM’s policies and recommendations to take into account the effects of climate change,” and supported a “HELCOM process to compile all climate mitigation and adaptation measures resulting from the Baltic Sea Action Plan that contribute to the Paris Agreement.”

In 2018, during the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, the HELCOM Ministers also emphasized “the need to further strengthen the scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change together with multiple other stressors on the Baltic Sea marine environment” and agreed that “HELCOM should take action to bridge this knowledge to policy and practice”.

Objectives of the HSC2022

This HSC2022 should facilitate a lively discussion of HELCOM work to protect the Baltic Sea in the context of a changing climate, including opportunities and challenges suggested by stakeholders. The impact of the fact sheet-based communication on climate-related issues at the policy level can be evaluated for the first time. Results from the joint HELCOM and UBA/BfN Blue Carbon Workshop 2021 are expected to be incorporated into one of the thematic sessions. The specific objectives of the HSC 2022 are to:

- Present the findings of the multifaceted [HELCOM Climate Fact Sheet](#) and determine how it can best be used to support marine protection processes;
- Identify options for integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation considerations into HELCOM activities and instruments (and vice versa);
- Identify possible management options regarding mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change, such as Blue Carbon but also those that aim at strengthening the ecosystem’s resilience such as nutrient load reductions, climate refuges and MPAs, and fisheries, as well as to discuss the outcomes of the joint HELCOM and UBA/BfN Blue Carbon Workshop 2021;
- Identify possible adaptation measures that aim at strengthening ecosystem resilience, such as those related to nutrient load reductions, climate refuges and MPAs, and fisheries
- Identify steps and opportunities for the implementation of the climate change related actions and measures contained in the BSAP.

Partners

The HSC2022 will be organized by HELCOM in conjunction with Baltic Earth and Germany (UBA):

- **HELCOM** will mainly focus on the policy aspects of climate change;
- **Baltic Earth** will address the underlying science related to climate change. Baltic Earth is co-leading the EN CLIME network and has co-developed the Baltic Sea Climate Change Fact Sheet;
- **Germany** (through UBA) will focus on the management aspects of climate change, including adaptation and mitigation measures. Germany currently holds the chairmanship of HELCOM, and climate change is one of the priorities of its tenure.

HSC2022 topic areas

The HSC2022 will cover three topic areas:

- **Science** (lead Baltic Earth): What is the latest scientific knowledge on climate change? What can we expect to happen in the future? What are the future science needs in regard to climate change? The findings of the Baltic Sea Climate Change Fact Sheet and the Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEAR) will provide the basis for this topic area.
- **Policy** (lead HELCOM): What is the specific role of HELCOM regarding climate change action? What policies need to be in place to guarantee an adequate climate action? What areas should be prioritized? What stakeholders should be involved, and at what stages of the policy implementation processes? What needs to be done to implement the measures on climate change contained in the BSAP?
- **Management** (lead Germany): What are some of the concrete measures – both existing and potential – for climate change adaptation and mitigation? What are the regional and global best practices? How can these measures efficiently be implemented in the Baltic Sea region? Regarding implementation, what is the role of the various stakeholders?

The HSC2022 participants will be asked to contribute to all the three topic areas.

Participants

Due to the online nature of the event, attendance will be restricted to about 100 participants. Ideally, each HELCOM Contracting Party should be represented by several representatives dealing with the science, policy or management aspects of climate change. In addition, Baltic Earth experts and all other relevant stakeholders such as HELCOM observers, NGOs and private sector representatives will also be invited. Participation will be granted on a first come first serve basis. The HELCOM Secretariat reserves a right of admission, in order to balance the geographical origin and professional backgrounds of participants.

Format

The HSC2022 will be a two-day online event:

- **Day 1: Webinar** on the effects of climate change in the Baltic Sea – current and predicted – based on the findings of the CCFS and the BACC III report. This part will contain a presentation of the physiochemical parameters (such as water and air temperature, sea ice etc.) directly affected by climate change, as well as the implications on ecosystems and human activities. The outcomes of the Blue Carbon Workshop will also be presented here. Day 1 will serve to establish the knowledge and common understanding on which the activities of Day 2 will build. The webinar will be recorded and streamed, open to additional, non-registered participants (viewing only). The webinar will comprise keynote addresses, presentations by experts and panel discussions.

Day 1 structure:

- Opening remarks
- Keynote address
- Presentations (CCFS, Blue Carbon WS)
- Panel discussion and Q&A
- Closing remarks

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- **Day 2: Workshop** on the topic areas. Participants are expected to actively contribute to all three topic areas. A set of objectives and expected outcomes for each topic area will guide the workshop actions – notably in the light of the BSAP’s measures on climate change and other related HELCOM processes:
 - **Science** (Baltic Earth): Breaking down drivers and pressures of climate change, and best ways for incorporating climate change considerations in future assessments of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS, indicators);
 - **Policy** (HELCOM): Identifying HELCOM’s role in regard to climate change policies and mitigation and adaptation measures, discussing the potential adaptation of HELCOM instruments such as recommendations in order to better consider the effects of climate change, and identifying ways to combine national and regional interests;
 - **Management** (Germany/UBA): Identifying possible adaptation and mitigation measures such as those related to Blue Carbon storage but also those linked to nutrient load reductions, climate refuges and MPAs, and fisheries, among other options that have the potential to increase the Baltic Sea’s resilience to the effects of climate change.

Day 2 structure:

- Welcome remarks and recap of Day 1
- Three workshop sessions: science, policy, management.
- HSC2022 recap and closing remarks

Outcome

The outcome of the HSC2022 on climate change will be presented to HELCOM HOD 62-2022 in June 2022 for further consideration.

Budget and technicalities

- Estimated costs: Not yet defined. Costs are expected to be low since the HSC2022 will be held online and making use of already existing resources such as online conferencing and collaboration tools. Any additional costs will be shouldered by the three organizers.
- Tools: Zoom or similar, and additional online collaboration tools such as Miro (digital whiteboard).

Timing

- HSC2022 event date: 9-10 March 2022

Organizational timing

- 17 November 2021: submission of the programme outline to HELCOM HODs for comments
- Second half of November 2021: approaching possible moderators and contributors
- 8-9 December 2021: feedback from HODs at HOD 61-2021
- First half of December 2021: Save-the-date to stakeholders/participants
- After Christmas holidays: technical/organisational planning