



Document title	Project proposal on strengthening the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances
Code	6-23
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	6 - Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups
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Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

Background

The current HELCOM framework for hazardous substances is mainly based on a limited number of priority contaminants and a list of measures to prevent their input to the marine environment. This approach is not able to account for the full range of sources and pathways of contaminants to the Baltic Sea, or the risks they pose to the marine environment. The existing framework does not enable timely reactions to emerging challenges in the continuously transforming patterns of chemicals used in industry and in consumer products, nor risks posed by co-occurring hazardous substances.

HOD 57-2019 supported the proposal by PRESSURE 11-2019 to develop a strategic regional policy document on hazardous substances, pointing out the need for extensive involvement of all Contracting Parties in preparation of the document. The work was launched in spring 2020 in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Centre of Stockholm University, with the support of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and under the oversight of the HELCOM Pressure Working Group. The content of the document discussed at PRESSURE 12-2020, and further developed with a group of regional experts from five Contracting Parties. The final draft policy background document was endorsed by PRESSURE 14-2021 to be published as a BSEP and the annexed summary to be a basis for proposing next steps for HELCOM approach to modernize the framework for hazardous substances.

The 'Regional policy document on hazardous substances' was subsequently presented at HOD 60-2021 ([document 5-16](#)). This review process raised the following issues to consider: the need for development of a holistic approach to HELCOM work on hazardous substances, the need to further coordinate regional implementation of various related policies (e.g. WFD, MSFD), the need to strengthen the management cycle for hazardous substances, the need for coordination of regional effort to prevent contamination of the marine environment by hazardous substances, the need for stronger HELCOM involvement in global initiatives related to hazardous substances, and the benefit of stronger cooperation on hazardous substances between relevant HELCOM bodies (e.g. State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups). The PRESSURE 14-2021 concluded that a short-term ad-hoc group within the existing HELCOM structure to support development of proposals towards these aims should be formed, noting that modifications of existing structures (e.g. EN-HZ) may be more relevant than establishing a new group.

HOD 60-2021 ([Outcomes paragraph 5.27 and 5.28](#)) welcomed the review of hazardous substances-related activities and the potential proposals for future ways forward, and supported the PRESSURE 14-2021 proposal on drafting updated Terms of Reference for EN-HZ. HOD60-2021 also supported the proposal of PRESSURE 14-2021 of an extension of resources and competence within the Secretariat to coordinate regional work on hazardous substances and requested the Secretariat to make a practical proposal to organize such work starting from the year 2022 ([Outcome paragraph 5.29](#)). This document contains a project

proposal for organizing the work at the Secretariat to modernize the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances, supporting also the work outlined in the draft updated terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Hazardous substances.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- consider and approve the project proposal to organize the work at the Secretariat for modernizing the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances,
- approve the use of HELCOM funds to finance the planned work, should these be available,
- invite Contracting Parties to consider providing funding for the project, as indicated in the document, to ensure that the planned work can take place.

Support for strengthening the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (PROJECT NO.)

1. Title of Project

Support for strengthening the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances

2. Project Manager(s)

Professional Secretary Lotta Ruokanen

3. Proposing Party

Contracting Party _____

Commission _____

Subsidiary body _____

Heads of Delegation _____

Executive Secretary X

4. HELCOM body supervising the project

Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation

5. Background and objectives

In Article 3 and Article 16 of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, 1992 (Helsinki Convention), the Contracting Parties agree to undertake measures to prevent and eliminate pollution of the marine environment of the Baltic and to provide pollution load data, as far as available.

The goal of the 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) with regard to hazardous substances and litter is a Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter. In order to achieve this goal a regional strategic approach and, on the basis of that approach, an action plan for HELCOM work on hazardous substances by 2024 should be developed (Action HLE1 of the BSAP).

The background for the development of the regional strategic approach was outlined in the “Background report on an update of HELCOM work on hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea” approved for publication by HOD 60-2021. The meeting also supported an extension of resources and competence within the Secretariat to coordinate regional work on hazardous substances.

The HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy sets out a framework for regular holistic assessments of the Baltic Sea’s environmental health. One of the objectives for the assessment, identified in the Strategy, is to enable the provision of data and information that links pressures on land, from the atmosphere, in coastal areas and at sea to their impacts on the marine environment. This demands a holistic approach to the problem of contamination of the aquatic environment by hazardous substances, integrating available data on sources, pathways and inputs of various contaminants with the results of monitoring in marine and coastal waters. The holistic assessment should also consider environmental quality standards and priority pollutants identified in the EU (e.g. WSD, MSFD) and global policies.

The updated Terms of Reference (ToR) and expanded responsibilities of the Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ), as presented to HOD 61-2021 for approval, also provide an outline of the foreseen task in relation to hazardous substances for the period 2022-2024, aligning with the duration of the project

proposal contained in this document. The proposed project directly addresses a number of tasks and objectives outlined in the updated ToR of EG Hazardous Substances (EG HAZ).

The recently published HELCOM indicator manual also addresses the strategic aspects of contaminants by situating HELCOM indicator and assessment work within a causal framework of Drivers-Activities-Pressures-State-Impact-Measures (DAPSIM). These major components are directly relevant for considering hazardous substances across their entire management cycle and linking that to assessments or indicators.

The above-mentioned regional commitments define objectives of this Project such as:

- Development of the strategic holistic approach document and respective plan for HELCOM work on hazardous substances, and the relevant preparatory work for achieving this.
- Strengthening of links and knowledge base of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea marine environment in relation to the DAPSIM framework, with particular focus on the steps of the framework for which current information on hazardous substances is weak (drivers, activities, pressures, impacts and measures), with a particular focus identified priority substances.

6. Tasks and expected results

In order to fulfil project objectives, the following tasks will be implemented:

- **Preparatory step 1:** Take stock of all HELCOM tools and recommendations related to hazardous substances management, identifying those which are obsolete and require revision, and initiate the revision process where it is urgently needed.
- **Preparatory step 2:** Identify the links between various international policies/initiatives (e.g. UN, EU, etc) and HELCOM, based on the mapping of relevant policies given in “Background report on an update of HELCOM work on hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea”.
- **Preparatory step 3:** Propose an update of the HELCOM framework where it does not respond to the global challenges and emerging issues (e.g. no duplication and clear interlinkages across policy initiative for a streamlines approach). Prepare a proposal on how in practical terms this should be achieved and in each case the benefits and needs.
- **Preparatory step 4:** Review the existing list of priority substances and support its revision via the development/finalization of a structured approach that can be regularly applied. Include within the approach a system for categorization, follow-up and key recommendations to be generated that support a strengthening of the management cycle tailored to key categories of substances. As a byproduct of the process, evaluate the EU MSFD and WFD criteria elements related to hazardous substances (MSFD D8 and D9, WFD Annex X priority substances and EQSD) and the relevance to preparatory step 2.
- **Supporting aspect:** Contribute to the work on hazardous substances under HOLAS III by supporting the proposed Targeted Topical Workshop on hazardous substances.
- **Supporting aspect:** Directly support the work of the HELCOM Expert Group on Hazardous Substances in accordance with its Terms of Reference and working plan.
- **Major output:** Draft a regional document on strategic holistic approach to manage hazardous substances (with an action plan) and initiate its consideration in accordance with the HELCOM rules and procedures.
- **Major output:** Carry out all the above tasks in support of and guided by the HELCOM Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ) and PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION Working Groups.

The implementation of the above-listed tasks will comprise the following deliverables:

1. Proposals on the revision of HELCOM documents and recommendations related to hazardous substances, and harmonization with relevant regional or international processes.
2. Approach for addressing, and proposal on, the revision of the HELCOM priority list of hazardous substances.
3. Draft proposal outlining and concretizing the links and knowledge base for hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea marine environment in relation to the DAPSIM framework, with particular focus on the steps of the framework for which current information on hazardous substances is weak (drivers, activities, pressures, impacts and measures), and identified priority substances.
4. Draft proposal for improving the strategic holistic and adaptive approach to manage hazardous substances.
5. Relevant input to the HOLAS III work on hazardous substances and taking the PLC-8 work on hazardous substances into consideration.

7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities ____ yes

- In Article 3 and Article 16 of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, 1992 (Helsinki Convention);
- Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021, HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, Lubeck, Germany, 20 October 2021;
- The HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark, 3 October 2013;
- Decision of HELCOM 41-2020 on the work plan of the HELCOM Third Holistic Assessment (HOLAS III) of the Baltic Sea;
- Decision of HOD 60-2021 on extension of resources and competence within the Secretariat to coordinate regional work on hazardous substances;
- The updated ToRs and expanded responsibilities of the Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ), as presented to HOD 61-2021.

8. Timetable

Deliverable	Deadline (quarter/year)
Proposals on the revision of HELCOM documents and recommendations related to hazardous substances	I - 2023
Proposal on the revision of the HELCOM priority list of hazardous substances	III - 2023
Draft regional document on strategic holistic and adaptive approach to manage hazardous substances	IV - 2023

9. Budget (taking into account financial year from 1 July to 30 June)**9.1 Total Costs**

68 020 Euro

9.2 Costs divided per financial year

2022/23 – 45 347 Euro

2023/24 – 22 673 Euro

9.3 Sources of financing divided per financial year

HELCOM budget:

Financial year 2022-2023: 22 673 euro

Financial year 2023-2024: 15 346,80 euro

Missing financing: 30 000 euro

10. Additional requests (workforce, equipment, facilities, etc.)

10.1 From the Contracting Parties

The funds allocated and planned for the project do not cover all work needed for the update of the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances, leaving a potential shortfall of 30 000 euros. Contracting Parties are invited to contribute to the filling this gap so that the project activities can be duly carried out, and to contribute actively to the development and consideration of documents aimed at ensuring regional acceptance of the proposed approaches. Ideally, this contribution should not be limited to the delegation of national experts to the expert and working groups considering drafts of respective documents. Rather, national contributions should also include the allocation of resources to take the lead in the development of specific themes which the Contracting Parties feel require additional support and for which specific expertise is nationally available.

10.2 From the Secretariat (not financed from the project budget)

The Project will be supported by the Secretariat.

11. Organization of the project

The project will be carried out by a Project Coordinator recruited by the Secretariat. The project is planned to start in July 2022 and to end by the end of the year 2023, covering 18 months of working time for the Project Coordinator.

The key requirements identified for this role are a background in environmental chemistry and a broad understanding or experience of international policy in the field of hazardous substances. The Project Coordinator coordinates the work and contributes to the implementation of the project tasks, guided by the HELCOM Expert and Working Groups identified (i.e. EG on hazardous substances, and the PRESSURE and State&Conservation WGs), as well as the relevant Professional Secretaries and the Indicator Manager. The Project Coordinator is involved in the collecting of information, outlining of the project products and creating their content, preparing material for and reporting progress to the relevant meetings and organizing workshops etc. as relevant to ensure the success of the project. The Project Coordinator contributes to the work of other HELCOM expert and working groups involved in the implementation of the project tasks, as required under the outlined tasks.

12. Signature of the Project Manager(s)

13. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary supports the Project proposal.

15. Decision of the Heads of Delegation

x to establish not to establish the project.