

Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on
Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling
Online, 2-3 December 2021

Document title	Status of development of a HELCOM indicator assessing copper
Code	2-1
Category	INF
Agenda Item	2 - Feedback from Relevant Bodies, including HELCOM, OSPAR and IMO MEPC
Submission date	18.11.2021
Submitted by	HELCOM Secretariat
Reference	Outcome of TG BALLAST 11-2020, para. 2.2-2.3

Background

TG BALLAST 11-2020 noted that discussions have been initiated within the HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances (EN-HZ) on the need for, and potential to develop, an indicator assessing copper as it reflects a hazardous substance that can also have maritime sources (e.g. shipping or offshore structures) and invited the HELCOM Secretariat to regularly inform the Task Group on the process of developing an indicator assessing copper ([Outcome of TG BALLAST 11-2020](#), paragraphs 2.2-2.3).

STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 discussed the development towards a copper indicator for HOLAS III ([document 3J-62](#)). There was support for development of the indicator, however a few issues were noted related to threshold value setting, in particular with relevance to natural background concentrations (Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021, para. 3J.242-3J-245). EN-HZ experts discussed open issues and agreed on an expert-based position for the development of the copper indicator towards HOLAS III. Thus, the current threshold value of 30 mg/kg (5% CORG) in sediment will be utilised for HOLAS III (pending ongoing approval by HOD 61-2021 (8-9 December 2021)). In addition, the indicator report will clearly define the following issues in the general text and also within relevant sections of the report:

1. The threshold value setting approach will be clearly documented, including the relevance of the ecotoxicological approach applied.
2. The implications related to natural background concentrations will be clearly outlined.
3. Any available information on natural background concentration in the region will be documented (table, map, descriptive) and referenced.
4. It will be clearly stated that when approaching threshold values (i.e. concentrations are near the threshold value) local natural concentrations will need to be defined to evaluate if the target of near natural background of copper is met locally and whether further measures are appropriate.
5. The links to and relevance of ongoing work on sediment cores would be acknowledged.
6. The need for further work in the future (i.e. to improve areas of uncertainty), as with any scientifically based indicator, would be defined in the report, including aspect such as: a broader overview of natural background concentrations across the region, ecotoxicological studies on Baltic Sea species, and the development of a HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Guideline.

Detailed information and preparatory work can also be found under recent EN-HZ meetings, for example the [draft indicator development document](#) and also a [presentation](#) given to EN-HZ 15-2021. HOD 61-2021 has been requested to approve the copper threshold value proposal as well as the use of copper as a core indicator for HOLAS III ([document 5-1. Rev. 1](#)).

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.