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Background

[HELCOM EN-Marine Litter Terms of Reference](#) (ToR) were agreed in 2015 for the period 2015-2018 ([Outcome of PRESSURE 3-2015](#), para 5.17 and [Outcome of STATE&CONSERVATION 3-2015](#), para 2J.2). PRESSURE will regularly revisit the progress of the work according to these ToR and will consider, together with STATE&CONSERVATION, arrangements for further work beyond 2018.

This document contains an evaluation of implementation of the ToR by 2018 and is meant to contribute to the discussion on a proposal for updating of the ToR for the period 2018-2021 as contained in document 4-2.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and make use of it when considering document 4-2.

Evaluation of implementation of the Terms of Reference for the HELCOM EN-Marine Litter

The call for establishing the network was raised through the need to (i) facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and (ii) develop core indicators to be used for the second HELCOM holistic assessment of the ecosystem health. The duties of the expert network are detailed in their Terms of Reference for the period 2015-2018. Below, each of the duties of the network for this period are analysed to evaluate the work conducted so far.

Presenting the EN-Marine Litter

The network consists of experts nominated by Contracting Parties and is open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. The table below contains the status of membership of the network, with 47 nominated experts from all HELCOM countries and several observer organisations. Unfortunately, the network lacks of a Chair.

HELCOM country/Observer	Number of nominees
Denmark	2
Estonia	6
European Union	1
Finland	4
Germany	6
Latvia	1
Lithuania	3
Poland	4
Russia	2
Sweden	10
CCB	1
EurEau	1
PlasticsEurope	1
Waste Free Ocean (WFO)	1
WWF Finland	1
WWF Poland	3

Facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

As part of the work of the Pressure Working Group and in cooperation with Maritime Working Groups and other groups as appropriate the HELCOM EN-Marine litter was to:

1. Provide its expertise for the Pressure WG to organize and facilitate practical implementation of the regional actions in HELCOM Recommendation 36/1 and follow-up. More specifically, the HELCOM EN-Marine Litter will support and cooperate with the Lead Parties for the individual regional actions.

Aiming at facilitating cooperation between experts the [HELCOM marine litter workspace](#) was established in 2015. Two regional workshops were held to specifically follow up the implementation of the RAP ML in [2016](#) and [2017](#), and one is to be held back to back to PRESSURE 9-2018 ([WS RAP ML 3-2018](#)). The outcomes of those workshops were subsequently considered by PRESSURE taking relevant decisions on specific actions; the list below summarises the most relevant ones from the regional perspective:

- *Document on the overview of HELCOM Recommendations on waste water management proposed for amendment to address microlitter: PRESSURE 7-2017 concluded that there is no reliable knowledge base to substantiate measures to prevent input of microlitter into the marine environment from urban and other storm waters, thus the proposed amendment of Recommendations was premature. It was agreed to continue building reliable knowledge base on monitoring of microlitter in storm water and come back to the discussion when the more*

reliable knowledge base is available ([Outcome of PRESSURE 7-2017](#), para. 3.12-3.14 and [document 3-3](#)) (in the frame of action RL4).

- HELCOM-Interreg Workshop on Marine Litter and Ecodesign held on 15 June 2018 in Berlin (PRESSURE 8-2018, [document 3-2](#)) (in the frame of action RL5).
- Assessment of the importance of sewage related waste coming from the upstream waste flow RL8 (PRESSURE 7-2017, [document 3-5](#)) (final report envisaged for consideration in WS RAP ML 3-2018, in the frame of action RL 8).
- Assessment on the establishment of deposit refund systems for bottles, containers and cans (e.g. glass, plastics and aluminum) (final report envisaged for consideration in WS RAP ML 3-2018, in the frame of action RL11).
- Report on landfills or dumpsites in the Baltic Sea which may eventually pose a risk to the marine environment (summary report envisaged for consideration in WS RAP ML 3-2018, in the frame of action RL14).
- Analysis of penalties and fines issues by OSPAR and HELCOM Contracting Parties for waste disposal offences at sea (MARITIME 17-2017, [document 6-3](#)) in the frame of action RS2).
- Initial draft for a HELCOM Recommendation on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) considered by PRESSURE 7-2017 ([document 3-4](#)). Further discussions held in PRESSURE 8-2018, FISH 7-2017 and FISH 8-2018 led to the upcoming consideration in PRESSURE 9-2018 and FISH 9-2018 of the results of regional questionnaire on the topic to discuss further activities (in the frame of actions RS 6, RS 7 and RS 10, RS 11 and RS 12).

It is also to point out the [Stakeholder Conference](#) held in 2016 in Helsinki (see image below) which succeeded in getting together over 90 representatives of governments, industry, municipalities, researchers, financing instruments, non-governmental organizations and consumers, for summarizing their views with regards to the Baltic situation, for finding better solutions through common discussions and ensuring leadership for combating litter.



2. Will seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR and Barcelona Convention, in implementation of actions of common interest;

Starting in 2015, informal meetings between the Barcelona Convention, the Black Sea, HELCOM, OSPAR, and countries which belong to two of these conventions have been held to identify actions of common interest within the different regional action plans on marine litter. In the last two meetings the European Commission also joined these meetings. Pressure has been regularly informed about the outcomes of such meetings:

- Meeting held on 18 September 2015 in Paris, France ([document 5-5](#) to PRESSURE 3-2015);
- Meeting held on 30 June 2016, in Madeira, Portugal ([document 3-1](#) to PRESSURE 5-2016);

- Meeting held on 30 November 2017 in Brussels, Belgium ([document 3-5](#) to PRESSURE 8-2018);
 - Meeting held on 4-5 July 2018 in Vrachati, Greece (document to be submitted to this meeting).
3. Provide expert input, as may be requested by e.g. Maritime WG, on relevant measures to reduce the sources and impacts of marine litter in the HELCOM area.

Maritime has been regularly informed about the RAP ML and the follow up of its implementation and its feedback considered as requested:

- [Document 6-1](#) to MARITIME 15-2015;
- [Document 6-2](#) to MARITIME 17-2017;
- [Document 6-1](#) to MARITIME 18-2018.

Monitoring and assessment

The HELCOM EN-Marine Litter was to:

1. Act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on marine litter being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts as part of the work by State and Conservation Working Group. More specifically, the HELCOM EN-Marine Litter will support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM indicators on marine litter, namely,

- a. development of a GES-boundary for the pre-core indicator 'Beach litter' with the aim of adoption by the end of 2016 at the latest;

Although there is no HELCOM core indicator on beach litter, work conducted on this indicator by the network following a Lead country approach¹ enabled to substantially improve the indicator report in 2016 ([HELCOM pre-core indicator on beach litter](#) and [Annex](#)).

As a follow up on this issue, the contribution from the HELCOM coordinated project [SPICE](#), co-financed by the EU, and which ended in December 2017 is to be underlined. The project was designed to contribute directly to the finalization of the 'Second HELCOM Holistic Assessment of Ecosystem Health in the Baltic Sea'. One of the themes of the project focussed on marine litter, which with the support and guidance of the network produced, among others, an "[Analysis of compiled beach litter data and proposals for setting preliminary beach litter baselines in the Baltic Sea](#)". The report considers available data from regular monitoring as carried out by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden for the period 2012 – 2016. Data was treated to calculate statistics parameters such as mean, median, standard deviation and relative standard deviation determined for each category of litter material and a sum of all items for specific beach types (reference, rural, urban and peri-urban). The calculations were carried out for two periods (i) 2012-2016 and (ii) 2015-2016. The first period was chosen because most of the countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden) started their beach litter monitoring in 2012. At the same time since 2015 monitoring is carried out in all countries (except Lithuania and Russia) and since this year, the network of monitoring stations has expanded, which may provide a more complete and coherent image of the extent of beach litter items found in different regions.

- b. development of monitoring guidelines to enable coordinated monitoring of beach litter;

The guidelines for monitoring beach litter as recently endorsed by STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 ([Outcome of STATE&CONSERVATION 8-2018](#), para. 3MA.22), are published on the [HELCOM website](#).

- c. assay existing methods and develop regionally coordinated monitoring programmes for the candidate indicator 'Microlitter in the water column' aiming at shifting it to pre-core indicator and eventually to core indicator;

¹ Lead country Poland, with Denmark and Sweden as co-lead countries.

Also within the frame of the SPICE project an analysis of data on microlitter in the Baltic Sea was conducted. A data call conducted through the network enabled updating available monitoring and research data on microlitter in the Baltic Sea. Based on compiled information a [report](#) was elaborated aiming at a future harmonisation of the protocols used for data collection and analyses. It includes maps showing spatial coverage of the studies for water surface, water column and sediment.

In addition, and also as part of the work conducted within SPICE, a [workshop](#) was held in November 2017 which had a focus of on microlitter: (i) sampling environments (i.a. water surface, water column, sediment, biota); (ii) options for sampling (i.a. manta trawl, Baby-Bongo net, box corer), and (iii) analytical methods (i.a. stereo microscopy, Raman, FTIR, chemical digestion, enzyme digestion).

In spite of all this work it has not been possible to shift the [candidate indicator on microlitter in the water column](#)² to a core status, and further work on this issue is needed. As concluded within the workshop the adequacy of using other microlitter indicators should be considered (i.a. microlitter in sediments).

- d. assay existing methods and develop regionally coordinated monitoring programmes and collect existing data for the candidate indicator 'Litter on the seafloor' aiming at shifting it to pre-core indicator and eventually to core indicator;

Development work on the candidate indicator '[Litter on the seafloor](#)' conducted in 2015 and 2016 enabled its shift from candidate to pre-core indicator³. Subsequently, and also as part of the work conducted within the SPICE project, an [analysis of amounts of marine litter recorded in trawl hauls under the BITS \(Baltic international trawl surveys\) monitoring programme, during the years 2012-2016](#) was conducted. National data (Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) was analyzed to determine the average total number of seafloor litter items at sub-basin level (both in terms of weight and number of items) as well as the material composition of the litter items. Also the Top 15 seafloor litter items for all the Baltic Sea area where the BITS programme is applied were identified. Finally, and analysis of the density of litter found depending on the seafloor type was conducted.

2. Update the indicator reports at regular intervals as decided in HELCOM. The HELCOM EN-Marine Litter will update the indicators reports on marine litter by mid-2017 and further update the reports as relevant by mid-2018, or as otherwise agreed in the HOLAS II project;

As mentioned in the previous sections during 2015 and 2016 the network worked intensively to improve the three marine litter indicator reports. In view of the latest developments conducted in 2017, the moment may have come to update them.

3. Ensure timely and quality assured delivery of indicator based assessments of marine litter. The HELCOM EN-Marine Litter will provide the expert input needed in order to deliver the thematic assessment on marine litter within the framework of the HOLAS II project by mid-2017 and to the further update of the assessment following the planned national consultation period leading up to the updated assessment to be delivered mid-2018;

The 'Second HELCOM Holistic Assessment of Ecosystem Health in the Baltic Sea' that was carried out by HELCOM through the HELCOM [HOLAS II](#) project reflects the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea for the period 2011–2015. The assessment covers the whole Baltic Sea marine region and provides information on the overall environmental status of and pressures on the Baltic Sea as well as social and economic aspects that are linked to the status of the Sea and the human activities impacting upon it. In June last year the assessment was published ('State of the Baltic Sea report, June 2017'), containing a

² Lead country Finland, with Denmark and Germany as co-lead countries.

³ Co-lead countries Denmark and Sweden.

descriptive section on marine litter since there is no core marine litter indicator. The [section on marine litter](#) was updated as part of the update of the report conducted in June 2018 ([‘State of the Baltic Sea – Second HELCOM holistic assessment 2011-2016’](#)), to mainly include information on: (i) the ten most frequent litter items at Baltic Sea level at different types of beaches, categorized into urban, peri-urban and rural beaches; and (ii) the proportion of marine litter material categories in bottom trawl hauls for sub-basins covered by the Baltic International Trawl Survey coordinated by ICES.

4. Will seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR and Barcelona Convention, regarding monitoring and assessment; Will investigate outcomes of the studies and pilot activities across Europe related to monitoring of litter in rivers and scope for the river and sea monitoring harmonization once experts on this issue have been nominated to the EN. Timing for this activity still need to be discussed.

In 2017 the Secretariat attended an OSPAR Riverine and Marine Litter Work Session held in Berlin, Germany organised in the context of the OSPAR RAP ML, which includes an action (no 41) on riverine litter and the need to cooperate with the (international) river basin commissions. Pressure was informed of the outcome of such event ([document 3-6](#) to PRESSURE 7-2017). Also in 2017, Pressure took note of a document on the state of the art on the contribution of riverine litter to the marine environment ([document 3-2](#) to PRESSURE 7-2017). However no further decisions on this issue have been made since then.