



Document title	Draft Terms of Reference of the HELCOM Expert Network on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EN SUBMERGED) 2022-2030
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Background

RESPONSE 28-2020 discussed the future of the HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED) for which HOD 55-2018 had extend the mandate until end of 2020.

RESPONSE 28-2020 took note of the draft Volume 1 of the Submerged Assessment on warfare materials and noted that progress has not been made on Volume 2 of the draft Submerged Assessment on wrecks in the Baltic Sea. The Meeting agreed that it is premature to publish the Submerged Assessment and discussed the next steps as listed in paragraph 9.6 of the Outcome of RESPONSE 28-2020. The Meeting further agreed that that new Terms of Reference are needed for the group to implement the tasks.

This document contains the draft Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Network on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EN SUBMERGED) for 2022-2030, drafted by interested parties as invited by RESPONSE 28-2020.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and approve the draft Terms of Reference of the HELCOM Expert Network on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EN SUBMERGED) 2022-2030 with the view to their subsequent adoption by HOD 61-2021.

Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the HELCOM Expert Network on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EN SUBMERGED)

Rationale

Within the framework of the work of the previous HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED), considerable progress was made in the subject area of submerged munitions. This is reflected not least in the work on developing a HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects in the Baltic Sea (Submerged Assessment).

At the same time, it became clear during the work that further efforts and cooperation are necessary in order to continue to work together especially on the data situation in the Baltic Sea region and thus to consolidate the common operational picture of munitions in the Baltic Sea. The measures for dealing with the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions are not yet coordinated and harmonized. A coordinated approach is crucial for a healthy Baltic Sea. At the same time, suggestions can be derived for other marine regions.

Overall aims and tasks

The overall aim of EN SUBEMERGED is to contribute to the development of an action plan and regionally coordinated actions on submerged munition and explosives of concern, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing potential adverse effects of munitions and its constituents on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. The Network shall on one hand act as a knowledge hub for all Contracting Parties to provide the recent information on munitions in the sea. On the other hand, the Network should also accompany the coordination of regional activities that addresses the potential challenges posed by munition objects. Finally, the Network appears helpful to achieve the tasks of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), referring to munitions in the sea.

The network will in the period of 2022 – 2030:

- Finalize the HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects in the Baltic Sea (Submerged Assessment) for publication.
- Act as platform for discussions about further needed actions tackling the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions.
- Contribute to a common operational picture about the distribution of munitions and explosives of concern in the whole Baltic Sea region.
- Based on the picture and a common understanding of distribution processes of munition constituents it will support Contracting Parties to identifying hot spot areas, perform site-specific risk assessments and discuss a possible prioritization of affected areas for further coordinated actions in addition to existing national ambitions for comprehensive risk managements.
- Seek cooperation with OSPAR relating to such objects dumped close to the HELCOM area which could affect the convention area, especially in the Skagerrak.
- Continuously assess, support and consult with specific research or scientific projects to keep previously issued recommendations up to date or to add recommendations as deemed necessary
- Acting as specific stakeholder and actively convey time-sensitive information on recent findings
- Develop and maintain, as well as monitor, application of a HELCOM toolbox for assessment of site-specific environmental risks related to potential abandonment, relocation and intended recovery or clean-up of dumped munitions and contaminated wrecks;
- Update previously issued guidelines or develop new guidelines for all potentially affected groups, as deemed necessary, taking into account existing national guidelines and contingency plans;

- Develop and maintain procedures for training of crews of response vessels that can be engaged in emergency response actions involving dumped munitions;
- Develop and maintain a knowledge collection of best available technologies on dealing with dumped munitions.

Participants

The EN SUBMERGED will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The network will cater for cross-sectorial expertise to carry out the tasks as needed.

Working procedures

The EN SUBMERGED works under the supervision of, reports to and receives guidance by the HELCOM Response Working Group according to its mandate. Additionally, the Network will provide consultations and support to other HELCOM working groups as the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions are of cross-sectional concerns.

The mode of work for the Network will be mainly via correspondence and online meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed. Co-Chairs for the Network will be elected at the first meeting after approval of the Terms of Reference. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Network. Prolongation of the mandate for the Network should be considered at the end of the working period based on identified needs.