



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

*Ad hoc* Seal Expert Group

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<b>Document title</b>	Further development of HELCOM marine mammal health indicators
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<b>Agenda Item</b>	8 – Core indicators and other activities under the Seal Expert Group team
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Germany and Sweden

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### Background

This document contains plans on the further development of HELCOM Marine mammal health indicators, submitted by Germany and Sweden.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the information and agree on the future development work of marine mammal health indicators.

## Further development of HELCOM Marine mammal health indicators

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In the past the HELCOM indicators 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' and 'Reproductive status of marine mammals' have been developed for grey seals based on data collected of hunted and by-caught animals originating mainly from Swedish and Finnish waters.

In many HELCOM countries data on the health status of marine mammals have been collected over the last decades. The members of the HELCOM Seal Health Team have homogenized the protocols between the different countries. Gaps of knowledge have been identified and completed by the different countries as much as possible. Fact sheets with the identification of key health parameters were prepared.

To further develop indicators on population dynamics and health for all marine mammal species and for the whole HELCOM area, the following steps are planned for the future:

- Discussion of renaming the indicator 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' into 'Energetic status of marine mammals'
- Preparation of a common database for health data from dead (stranded, hunted, by-caught) and alive caught marine mammals collected in all HELCOM countries
- Verification of data from the Southern Part of the HELCOM area for grey seals for the indicator 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' or renamed indicator
- Development of the indicator 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' or renamed indicator for harbour seals and ringed seals
- Verification of data from the Southern Part of the HELCOM area for grey seals the indicator 'Reproductive status of marine mammals'
- Development of the indicator 'Reproductive status of marine mammals' for harbour seals and ringed seals
- Development of the indicator 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' for harbour porpoises

- Development of the indicator ‘Reproductive status of marine mammals’ for harbour porpoises
- Identification of key health parameter for grey seals based on the health database
- Identification of key health parameter for harbour seals based on the health database
- Identification of key health parameter for ringed seals based on the health database
- Identification of key health parameter for harbour porpoises based on the health database
- Monitoring guidelines for both dead animals and live catches will be revised and further developed
- A systematic assessment/of seal and porpoise health from the health database will make it possible to correlate the indicator nutritional/energetic and others status of seals to a detailed understanding of seal health. Thus the indicators can act as an early warning when seal health is deteriorating.

Projects to support future development have started in Denmark and Germany including also partners from Poland. Work in Sweden and Finland is initiated. Reliable structures in Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are still missing. Further work will be coordinated by the HELCOM Seal Health Team.

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