



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
10-2019

Hamina, Finland, 6-10 May 2019

Document title	Draft workplan for HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances
Code	7J-5
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	7J – Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
Submission date	15.4.2019
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

State and Conservation 9-2018 in principle endorsed the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the Expert Network on Hazardous Substances (EN-HAZ) and took note of the information that once a draft work plan is available it will be submitted to State and Conservation 10-2019 for approval ([Outcomes paragraph 7J.12](#)).

HOD 55-2018 took note that the ToRs for the EN-HAZ have been updated ([Outcomes paragraph 4.44](#)).

EN-HZ held their 10th meeting (EN-HZ 10-2019) on 4-5 April (ICES headquarters, Copenhagen) and the ToRs have now been completed to include a work plan and timeline.

This document provides Annex 1 to the [ToRs for EN-HAZ](#), Workplan and Timeline for 2018-2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- endorse the workplan of the expert network.

HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances

Work plan for 2018-2021:

1. Information exchange and forum for advancement
 - a. Information exchange: Exchange national, regional and international developments in the field of hazardous substances within the group to advance approaches applied in the Baltic Sea region and maintain a cutting-edge assessment approach.
 - b. Project possibilities: Where possible the expert network should explore opportunities to develop common projects to support this aim, and exchange relevant information regionally through HELCOM. Additionally, inviting presentations from relevant research projects (national and international/regional) should also be explored (e.g BONUS, EU funded, Nordic Council of Ministers. Relevant examples may include: Balthealth, SEAM).
2. Cooperation and support of HELCOM processes
 - a. Cooperation: Cooperative work with relevant HELCOM groups (e.g. CG PHARMA, EN SUBMERGED, EN LITTER, EN DREDS), with other relevant projects, and tasks or requests for support via the HELCOM Working Groups may also be relevant.
 - b. Support for HELCOM activities: Support for general HELCOM processes will be vital, such as supporting the work of:
 - the HELCOM Sufficiency of Measures Platform (SOM Platform) and the sub-group on hazardous substances (HZ Topic Team)
 - associated work via the HELCOM ACTION Project
 - revision of documentation related to hazardous substances (e.g. guidelines), update of HELCOM indicator and holistic assessments (at identified time points).
 - the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (through the BSAP UP Project).

Such work may also represent intersessional contact or specific online meetings to ensure relevant HELCOM wide deadlines can be maintained.

3. Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines

- a. Develop guidelines for hazardous substances and effects of hazardous substances, focusing initially on those previously discussed within the expert network (i.e. PFOS in biota, and HBCDD in biota and sediments), to cover all relevant substances and matrix types utilized in HELCOM assessment. Linkages with other relevant institutions such as Water Framework Directive/ WG Chemicals and OSPAR processes should be developed.
- b. Subsequent review, revision and update of these guidelines will also be required either as methodologies and approaches change at the expert/monitoring level or based on regular timetables for revision requested by relevant Working Groups.
- c. Follow up on methodological developments within the group (e.g. sediment core dating, monitoring of new substances), and include update or development of relevant guidelines.

4. Review of substance lists and collation of areas of concern

- a. Exchange information with CG PHARMA and PRESSURE Working Group to support and maintain lists of substances that are regional priorities or of known/emerging concern. Ensure substance lists are developed in line with, and compatible, with EU and OSPAR equivalents.
- b. Review these substances and their role, impact and concentrations in the Baltic Sea region with a view to either potential future indicator development or potential inclusion in assessments of general Baltic Sea status (e.g Thematic Assessment of hazardous substances, pressure and impact assessments, integrated overviews).

5. Discussion, development and incorporation of appropriate novel monitoring approaches

- a. Maintain a current overview of the development of novel monitoring and assessment approaches (e.g. passive sampling, cutting-edge analytical methodologies) and evaluate them to ensure that, where viable, these are raised through the appropriate channels in the HELCOM structure, to facilitate their incorporation into future assessments. Novel approaches should aim to further develop critical aspects in future assessments such as spatial coverage or substances where detection limits may be technically hard to achieve.
- b. Carry out an evaluation of the application of sediment cores and sampling procedures for hazardous substances assessment, particularly with a long term input and fate perspective.
- c. Explore appropriate approaches to evaluate and assess offshore sources of hazardous substances and their impact on the marine environment, including a system of classification for these sources.
- d. Develop approaches that clearly address biological effects and better understand the correlation and linkages between ecosystem components (e.g. biodiversity) and within food webs.

6. Assessments and related aspects

- a. Explore adjustment of existing indicators to, for example: increase spatial coverage where possible, evaluate threshold values and their correspondence across matrix types, explore clear evaluation of contaminants in seafood where possible, review requirements and application of supporting parameters (e.g. Aluminum and Lithium in sediments), to evaluate the inclusion of Zebra mussels, and incorporate approaches to include correction factors between different tissue types and trophic level correction, and the potential for threshold value relevance to change in the future (e.g. due to changes in climate) may need to be considered.
- b. Incorporate trend, source and pathway data into indicator evaluations and overall assessments, where possible and valid (i.e. linkages with PRESSURE Working Group, PLC and EMEP). Utilize such data to provide a broader overview of the inputs and the overall distribution of contaminants.
- c. Develop appropriate solutions to better evaluate biological effects. Develop the expertise within the group and cooperate with ICES WGBEC and EU processes to expand the development of valid indicators. Exploration of integrating several comparable approaches as a single indicator and development of such indicators within ICES WGBEC may be valid.
- d. Support and advise of the development of improved data reporting, assessment tool and automation processes.
- e. Gather and analyze data to review and assess the potential (and validity) of new indicator development to address identified priority areas or substances (e.g. Copper, PFAS and substitutes for PBDEs).
- f. Update indicators (evaluations and reports) and assessments (e.g. Thematic assessments) at appropriate time scales, as defined within HELCOM.

7. Reporting

Report on the group's activities to the relevant HELCOM working groups (i.e. State and Conservation and PRESSURE). The Chair(s) will report regularly, i.e. for the information document deadline of each working group meeting (or the decision deadline if relevant). The activity report should be a brief (circa 1 page) document that summarizes activities and developments which have taken place since the previous report, a list of links to the expert group's previous meeting sites/workspaces containing documents/outcomes, and a list of aspects on which decisions or guidance from Working Groups are required. A template for the reporting will be provided by the Secretariat.

These overall tasks and timeline provide the framework to guide the work of the expert network and the specific implementation may depend on availability of resources. If possible the network might be a

platform to develop and apply for externally funded projects in order to accomplish the listed objectives. Members of the network are encouraged to share opportunities in this respect.

For a timeline associated with the workplan please see below.

Timeline of work (dark blue indicated areas of dedicated work and pale blue indicates ongoing work or review processes).

Task	Action		2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021
			Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Proposed meeting regularity		X		X		X		X		X		X
1	Information exchange and forum for advancement												
2	Cooperation and support of HELCOM processes												
	General HELCOM processes, including Working Groups												
	SOM Platform, HZ Topic Team, ACTION Project, BSAP UP Project.												
3	Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines												
	Develop guidelines, focusing initially on those previously discussed within the expert network.												
	Subsequent review, revision and update of relevant guidelines – as required.												
	Follow up on methodological developments.												
4	Review of substance lists and collation of areas of concern												
	Information exchange regarding lists of substances that are regional priorities or of known/emerging concern.												
	Review substances and their role, impact, concentrations in the Baltic Sea region												
5	Discussion, development and incorporation of appropriate novel monitoring approaches												
	Maintain a current overview of the development of novel monitoring and assessment approaches and evaluate them.												
	Evaluation of sediment cores and sampling procedures for hazardous substances assessment.												

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Task	Action		2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021
			Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Proposed meeting regularity		X		X		X		X		X		X
	Explore appropriate approaches to evaluate and assess offshore sources of hazardous substances.												
	Develop approaches that clearly address biological effects												
6	Assessments and related aspects												
	Explore adjustment of existing indicators												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Al and Li normalization 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of Zebra mussels 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and advise of the development of improved data reporting, assessment tool and automation processes, including integrated assessment tool (CHASE). 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine spatial coverage issues and explore ways to effectively increase assessment confidence. 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate threshold values and their correspondence across matrix types (e.g. PBDE sediment vs biota or use of BAC for Cd in fish liver). 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine existing study reservations. 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise approaches to include correction factors between different tissue types and trophic level correction. 												

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Task	Action		2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021
			Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Proposed meeting regularity		X		X		X		X		X		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore clear evaluation of contaminants in seafood where possible. 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine potential to incorporate trend data from sources and pathways into indicator evaluations and overall assessments. 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop appropriate solutions to better evaluate biological effects. 				Link with WGBEC and OSPAR				Initiate with a physical meeting				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather and analyze data to review and assess the potential (and validity) of new indicator 												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update indicators (evaluations and reports) and assessments (e.g. Thematic assessments) at appropriate time scales, as defined within HELCOM. 									Proposed that automated indicator evaluation system is tested by this point at the latest.			
7	Reporting												
	Chair to report to each S&C and PRESSURE meeting		DONE										

Validity of ToR's

These ToRs are valid for a three year period (beginning October 2018) and are to be subjected to review and, as appropriate, revision by the expert network and approval by the State and Conservation Working Group at their meeting prior to the end of the validity of these ToRs.

Expected outputs

Organization of work

The network will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. The network will report to and receive guidance from the State and Conservation and PRESSURE Working Groups.

The mode of work for the expert network will be mainly via correspondence and online meetings facilitated by the Secretariat, ideally with a physical meetings taking place annually. Sub groups might be defined in order to work more thematically. Two co-Chairs (Germany and Finland) were elected unanimously by the group at EN-HZ 10-2019. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated for the aim. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the network.

Work on indicators will take place within expert group meetings and intersessionally, as required. Where necessary, online meetings will be utilized. The Secretariat can support experts in establishing and organizing such meetings.