



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION  
13-2020

Online, 5-9 October 2020

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<b>Document title</b>	HELCOM Workshop on Pelagic Habitats - Draft ToRs and plan
<b>Code</b>	4J-13
<b>Category</b>	DEC
<b>Agenda Item</b>	4J – Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Secretariat

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### Background

State and Conservation 12-2020 discussed the potential need for additional structures to support work in newly identified themes that have no direct Expert Group coverage within the existing HELCOM structures (State and Conservation 12-2020, [Outcomes paragraph 4J.61-2](#)). The outcomes of State and Conservation 12-2020 were presented to the HOD 58-2020 ([Document 5-14](#)) and the proposals made were endorsed (HOD 58-2020, [Outcomes paragraph 5.17-21](#)).

The following document provides a draft proposal for how to achieve good input to HOLAS III via these new Correspondence Groups or Workshops, including provisional timelines and Terms of Reference (ToRs).

Nominations for the groups/workshops should be submitted to the Secretariat ([owen.rowe@helcom.fi](mailto:owen.rowe@helcom.fi)) **by Friday 30 October** to initiate planning and preparatory work.

This document specifically addresses the draft plan and ToRs for a HELCOM Workshop on the topic of Pelagic Habitats.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- review the content of the draft ToR and the provisional time plan and improve the focus and details as needed,
- endorse the draft ToRs and the provisional time plan and their submission to GEAR 23-2020 for information and HOD for intersessional approval,
- initiate national processes to provide nomination of experts to populate the group and the planned workshop (including the preparatory work required in advance of them).

## HELCOM Workshop on Pelagic Habitats

### Draft Terms of References for HELCOM Workshop on Pelagic Habitats (HELCOM Pelagic WS1-2021)

The HELCOM Workshop on Pelagic Habitats (HELCOM Pelagic WS1-2021) will be a single event to bring together regional experts on the topic and synthesise information into a solid plan ahead, the ultimate goal of the process being an improved and functional assessment of pelagic habitats for the Third Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III).

#### Validity of ToR

Single event Workshop planned for late February 2021 (Period of validity for the overall work: Autumn 2020 – autumn 2023).

This Workshop will be a single event and further extension of the work or further meetings or Workshops will be carried out via discussion with, and decisions made by State and Conservation.

#### Main aims and focus of the group

- 1) Review the topic specific work plan generated in the Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop ([Pelagic Habitats work plan](#)) and any relevant regional projects addressing the topic,
- 2) Review policy requirements for an assessment of pelagic habitats,
- 3) Review the updated 'zooplankton mean size and total stock (MSTS)' HELCOM indicator,
- 4) Review the updated 'seasonal succession of dominating phytoplankton groups' HELCOM indicator,
- 5) Devise possible approaches to integrate the two existing indicators into an assessment of pelagic habitats,
- 6) Identify key components of an assessment of pelagic habitats (i.e. missed by these two indicators alone),
- 7) Discuss and identify alternative and improved pelagic habitat assessments and their viability for use in HOLAS III.

The work in HELCOM on indicators and assessments needs to be driven by the best available scientific knowledge, but should also consider aspects that may influence the design or application of assessment, including: the need for comparable and harmonized regional assessments, potential sub-regional variation, data availability and ecologically relevant assessments of status. These factors are key in the development of a solid assessment, and confidence evaluation, that offers the broadest and most inclusive regional coverage possible.

#### Organization of work

A core team, including Chair(s) for the workshop, will be identified to plan the agenda and preparatory work for the workshop.

The Workshop will be guided by the State and Conservation Working Group. Information flow to State and Conservation is a key factor after the workshop to maintain information flow, discuss future developments and gain approval on the proposed work ahead towards HOLAS III. Where relevant national or regional projects may also offer relevant input to the Workshop and work ahead.

The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the workshop. The indicator coordinator ([owen.rowe@helcom.fi](mailto:owen.rowe@helcom.fi)) and the Professional Secretary responsible for State and Conservation

([Jannica.Haldin@helcom.fi](mailto:Jannica.Haldin@helcom.fi)) will act as contact points to support the preparation and running of the Workshop.

#### Reporting

The Chair(s) of the workshop will report back to the State and Conservation WG on the activities of the workshop. For State and Conservation WG this will take the form of an agenda item at WG meetings.

#### Membership

Nominations for the core team to plan the workshop will be provide by CPs.

Nominations for the workshop will be provided by CPs. It is anticipated that this Worksop will be dominantly formed of experts already nominated to existing HELCOM Expert Groups (e.g. the Zooplankton Expert Network (ZEN) and the Phytoplankton Expert Group (PEG)) that currently address specific independent components of the Baltic Sea pelagic system. Additional nominations are anticipated where Experts have knowledge related to the assessment of pelagic habitats as an integrated/single entity.

Nominations should be submitted to the Secretariat ([owen.rowe@helcom.fi](mailto:owen.rowe@helcom.fi)) **by Friday 30 October, 2020.**

## Provisional time plan and proposed workflow

### **Step 1: Nominations to populate the CG – 30 October 2020**

Nominations of national Experts will be made by State and Conservation Contacts to the Secretariat ([owen.rowe@helcom.fi](mailto:owen.rowe@helcom.fi)) by **Friday 30 October, 2020**.

### **Step 2: Identify preparatory work required – by 30 November 2020**

Known preparatory work includes: 1) Identify a core team to plan the agenda and preparatory work, 2) update of the zooplankton and phytoplankton indicators to include full coverage and threshold value application, 3) Gather key reference material to share in preparation for the Workshop, 4) Gather short presentations on national approaches used for pelagic habitats, 5) Identify key presenters and preparatory work for the Workshop.

### **Step 3: Workshop – late February 2021**

The following topics will be addressed at the Workshop:

- Aims of Workshop (short introduction)
- HOLAS III and indicator development deadlines (short introduction)
- Topic specific indicator work plan (short introduction)
- Policy requirements (short introduction)
- Updated zooplankton indicator (short overview)
- Updated phytoplankton indicator (short overview)
- Data availability for pelagic indicators (ICES, COMBINE database, follow up on data flows workshop)
- National approaches (short presentations from Contracting Parties, where applicable)
- Possible integration of existing HELCOM indicators (presentation/discussion)
- OSPAR tied approach and life-form index (presentation and discussion)
- Define plan ahead for HOLAS III
  - What will be done for HOALS III (existing indicators, new approach)
  - Will these be test cases, a generic overall assessment, or a form of indicator assessment
  - Will threshold values be applied, if so on what basis
  - What abiotic factors should be included and how
  - What information is needed to support the assessment of pelagic habitats in the HOLAS III report
  - What will be the required work ahead to achieve the assessment at HOLAS III and who will take it forward
- Outcome to be provided to State and Conservation (circa April 2021).