



Document title	Draft Terms of Reference for HELCOM EG Eutrophication
Code	3J-90
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	3 – Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
Submission date	9.9.2021
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	IN-Eutrophication 21-2021, para. 8.3

Background

The purpose of the HELCOM Intersessional network on eutrophication is to support and further develop the coordination of regional work on eutrophication, in support of the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and subsequent commitments. The Network was founded following a decision by STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015 to further develop HELCOM Eutrophication assessment related work following EUTRO OPER project.

This document contains the draft terms of reference for the network for the years 2022-2024, with the more detailed list of tasks to be completed by the network contained in the workplan in Attachment 1. The terms of reference were considered by IN-EUTROPHICATION 21-2021, and the meeting agreed to having generic terms of reference and with the network's workplan as a living document available on the group's workspace.

As the group's work has expanded in scope in the past years and can no longer be considered of temporary nature, and to align the terminology across groups, IN-EUTROPHICATION 21-2021 supported changing the name of the group to 'Expert Group on eutrophication' (EG EUTRO) and agreed to submit the terms of reference with this change to STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- review the ToR and the associated workplan for the years 2022-2024 (Att. 1);
- agree to the change of the name to Expert Group on Eutrophication (EG EUTRO) ;
- approve the update ToRs.

DRAFT Terms of reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Eutrophication 2022-2024

Background:

In accordance with the outcome of State and Conservation 3-2015 supporting the establishment of intersessional network on eutrophication to further develop HELCOM Eutrophication assessment related work following EUTRO OPER project, the intersessional network on eutrophication (IN-Eutrophication) was founded.

State and Conservation 8-2018 discussed the future plans of the network and longer-term indicator development and was of the opinion that the work should be linked with the HELCOM work plan on indicators.

IN-Eutrophication 11-2018 discussed the draft terms of reference and suggested to have a more generic terms of reference and noted that the current draft terms of reference does not mention the need for development of linkages between indicators with different themes (e.g. between biodiversity and eutrophication).

Purpose:

The purpose of the network is to support and further develop the coordination of regional work on eutrophication, in support of the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and subsequent commitments. This relates in particular to the following Ecological Objectives:

- Clear water
- Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels,
- Natural level of algal blooms
- Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals
- Natural oxygen levels

As well as to provide expert input to HELCOM work related to eutrophication in general, and specifically on the tasks identified in these ToR's,

Scope:

The overall scope of the group is to facilitate regional cooperation, including identifying and specifying necessary work/projects according to the needs under the BSAP and subsequent commitments, if possible implement the identified work e.g. by national funding or joint research applications. Further the groups is a platform for exchange of experiences as well as harmonization of methods concerning the work with eutrophication. This work includes, but is not limited to monitoring, data availability, indicator work and assessments.

Objectives:

- to foster informal exchange of information and experiences on eutrophication, monitoring and assessment;
- to support development of regional understanding and harmonization of methods and processes;
- to support national level work related to eutrophication;
- to support regional assessments of eutrophication according to the BSAP and link to relevant European directives, especially the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- to identify and link national work with HELCOM work.

Tasks:

The tasks of the group cover a range of different aspects related to eutrophication assessment. Subgroups might be defined in order to work more thematically under the roof of the expert group in order to facilitate intersessional work. The group's activities link to the following tasks:

Indicators

Act as a platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on eutrophication and support the HELCOM indicator work by:

- Supporting the review of thresholds, if needed, and particularly with relevance for regional coordination.
- Supporting the development of relevant targets in order to achieve defined thresholds.
- Supporting Lead countries to further develop and review eutrophication indicators, in close cooperation with other relevant HELCOM initiatives. This includes but is not limited to:
 - o Updating the core indicator reports at regular intervals, as decided in HELCOM. This includes regular review of the data and assessment products;
 - o Assisting to identifying possible new indicators taking into account commitments by Contracting Parties who are also EU member states under the MSFD.
 - o Reviewing and guiding the indicator work at all relevant stages, including providing constructive support to the indicator leads, for example by reading and commenting on reports or by providing alternative solutions and text for these indicator products.

Assessment

- Update the eutrophication assessment manual developed by EUTRO-OPER at regular intervals;
- Have responsibility for QA/QC guidance of the full eutrophication assessment process from monitoring to assessment products;
- Further development of the eutrophication assessment methodology, including regular scientific review of the agreed threshold values.

Reporting

- report on their activities (including assessment work) to the relevant HELCOM working groups
- The Chair will report to State and Conservation regularly, i.e. for the information document deadline of each State and Conservation meeting. The activity report should consist of information on activities and developments which have taken place since the previous report, a list of links to the meeting sites of previous meetings or workspaces containing documents, and a list of aspects on which decisions or guidance from State and Conservation are required. A template for the reporting will be provided by the Secretariat.

These overall tasks provide the framework to guide the work of the network on implementation which depends on availability of resources. The network may further serve as a platform to develop and apply for external funded projects in order to accomplish the listed objectives.

Work plan:

A work plan for 202X-20XX, aligned with the review period of the ToRs, will be prepared for and elaborated by the Group, after which the workplan will be reviewed and updated in the Group's meetings prior to the end date of the workplan, to be presented for approval by State and Conservation WG.

Validity of ToR's

The work of the group is open ended. The Terms of Reference are subject to review and, as appropriate, revision by the expert Group and approval by the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group every three years.

Expected outputs

The network will initiate and carry out regular assessments of eutrophication for the Baltic Sea, at intervals decided in HELCOM. It will continue the cooperation between HELCOM and ICES to maintain the full process that leads from reporting of monitoring data to assessment products. The network will ensure the high quality of the assessment tools and methodology.

Organisation of work

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

The mode of work for the expert group will be mainly via correspondence and on-line meetings facilitated by the Secretariat, the expected frequency being 3-4 meetings per year, of which one has the option of being a physical meeting in Helsinki. A Chair will be elected by the group. 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 utilised. The Secretariat is available to support experts in establishing and organising such meetings.