



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
15-2021

Online, 4-8 October 2021

Document title	Proposal from EN-HZ for regional position to WG Chemicals
Code	3J-92
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	3J – Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
Submission date	13.9.2021
Submitted by	Secretariat

Background

This document contains a proposal to submit a document to EU WG Chemicals to outline a regional HELCOM opinion for inclusion of certain substances and sampling matrix types (sediment) within existing EQS threshold value review and prioritisation processes.

The document was drafted by Sweden and discussed at EN-HZ 16-2021 ([document 3-3](#)). The EN-HZ 16-2021 meeting provided additional input and supported the presentation of this proposal to State and Conservation with the request for endorsement to submit a document on this issue to EU WG Chemicals (Outcomes paragraphs circa 3.39-3.43, outcomes under finalisation at this point). The next meeting of EU WG Chemicals is expected to take place in mid-October, thus, if endorsed by this Meeting (State and Conservation 15-2021), it would be submitted directly to EU WG Chemicals on 4 October to be available 2 weeks in advance of their meeting.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to endorse the proposal to submit this message to EU WG Chemicals.

A HELCOM message to WG Chemicals: include marine sediment and TBT in EQS-dossier revision of existing Priority Substances

To assess if chemical contaminants may give rise to pollution effects in the marine environment, EU member states shall regularly assess whether or not threshold values have been achieved for a number of contaminants in the matrix used for monitoring (water, sediment, or biota) (MSFD Com. Dec. (EU) 2017/848). The contaminants assessed are the Priority Substances (PS) and River Basin Specific Pollutants (RBSP) identified under the Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/60/EC) as well as a list of additional contaminants. For WFD contaminants, the threshold values should be the values set in accordance with that Directive. For contaminants measured in sediment, no values are currently set under the WFD. Sediment threshold values therefore needs to be established through regional or subregional cooperation. One risk with the lack of commonly agreed sediment threshold values is thus that different values are used within and between (sub)regions.

From the previous round of MSFD reporting it is clear that sediment is a widely used matrix for monitoring and reporting (Tornero et al 2021¹). In HELCOM, there are commonly agreed marine sediment threshold values for the majority of the substances used as core indicators for hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea. Monitoring contaminants in marine sediment is hence an important basis for the common assessments of the Baltic Sea status as well as for the national MSFD assessments. As sediment is already widely used, commonly agreed marine threshold values would increase the comparability of status assessments within, as well as between, the Baltic Sea and other regions. Furthermore, existing sediment QS values are often a result of recalculated water values but should preferably be based on toxicity data for benthic organisms.

One substance of high concern in the Baltic Sea is tributyltin (TBT). TBT was historically used to prevent biofouling on ship and boat hulls but is today globally banned due to its known effects on e.g. the hormonal function of sensitive marine organisms². Even though concentrations have generally decreased since the ban, TBT remains above current HELCOM threshold values in most areas of the Baltic Sea². It is hence important to improve the work with this substance, including the status assessments based on both sediment and biota monitoring. Denmark recently initiated a discussion on this matter in HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous substances (EN HZ), proposing an update of existing threshold values for TBT based on new data. EN HZ notes the ongoing EQS-dossier revision of existing Priority Substances under the Working Group Chemicals. EN HZ considers this as an opportunity to highlight the importance of marine sediment data for status assessments forming the basis for identification of relevant measures needed. Furthermore, EN HZ acknowledge the need for harmonised and up-to-date threshold values specifically for TBT, including all relevant matrices i.e. both sediment and biota. EN HZ therefore proposes that HELCOM commonly communicate to WG Chemicals the need for marine sediment standards in general and TBT (sediment and biota) being prioritised and included in the review process.

¹ Tornero, V., Boschetti, S., Hanke, G., Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Review and analysis of Member States' 2018 reports - Descriptor 8: Contaminants in the environment - Descriptor 9: Contaminants in seafood, EUR 30659 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, ISBN 978-92-76-34085-0, doi:10.2760/621757, JRC124588

² HELCOM 2017. TBT and imposex. HELCOM core indicator report. ISSN: 2343-2543