

# HELCOM – A coordination platform for the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Baltic Sea region

## Why HELCOM?

The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) is an intergovernmental organization of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries and the EU and a regional environmental policy maker in the Baltic Sea area. HELCOM's work on the protection of the marine environment is based on the globally agreed ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. Eight of the nine HELCOM countries are also members of the European Union which gives reason for HELCOM to link tightly to European policies.

As the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) both have the

same goal – good environmental status (GES) of the marine environment by 2021 and 2020, respectively – HELCOM's activities have been aligned so as to implement synergistically both the Plan and the Directive.

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive states very clearly that regional marine commissions, like HELCOM in the Baltic Sea, should play a key role in regionally coordinating its implementation. To ensure this, the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, held in Moscow in May 2010, agreed to establish the role of HELCOM as a platform for the regional implementation of the Directive.

## Supporting research and development activities

The technical coordination of the regional implementation of the Directive is being carried out by the Joint Advisory Board of the HELCOM CORESET and TARGREV Projects. These projects are expert projects developing HELCOM core indicators and targets reflecting good environmental status, the former for biodiversity and hazardous substances and the latter for eutrophication. The activities of the two projects are fully linked to the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and they produce indicators with targets that are in line with the needs of the implementation of the Directive and the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

**HELCOM TARGREV** is a project developing eutrophication targets for the Baltic Sea sub-basins, *inter alia* based on modeling. The scientific products of the project will be used as a basis for the decision-making process of setting

targets for eutrophication core indicators, such as nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations, water transparency, phytoplankton blooms and oxygen conditions. These targets will also be used as a basis for reviewing, and if necessary, revising the nutrient reduction targets of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. For the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, this work contributes to the assessment of eutrophication status and the pressures causing eutrophication.

The **HELCOM CORESET** project consists of two expert groups focusing on developing core indicators for biodiversity and hazardous substances. The hazardous substances core indicators will address levels of contaminants in the environment and their biological effects. The biodiversity core indicators will include a wider set of indicators, including abundance, condition and distribution of a number of species and habitats as well as food web and sea-floor characteristics.



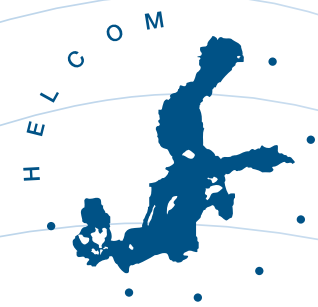
## Launching the implementation

HELCOM's initial activities include *inter alia* coordination of indicator development and setting of environmental targets, as well as facilitation of regional coordination and cooperation on the preparation of national initial assessments. HELCOM also has an important role as a regional information exchange platform related to the work carried out in the countries to implement the Directive.

HELCOM is in the process of finding an agreement on common principles for core indicators and associated targets reflecting good environmental status as well as assessment methodologies. The core indicators will consist of a set of indicators on the state of the ecosystem and on

anthropogenic pressures affecting the ecosystem state. They will be used as a basis for integrated indicator-based assessment of the environmental status of the Baltic Sea.

The preliminary core indicators will be submitted for national consideration and decision-making processes in October 2011. The development of core indicators is the first step in the revision of HELCOM's coordinated joint monitoring programmes and will give input to defining a monitoring programme that provides the necessary information for assessing our progress towards good environmental status of the Baltic Sea.



Helsinki Commission

Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission



[www.helcom.fi](http://www.helcom.fi)

# Time line of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and HELCOM regional implementation platform activities in the Baltic Sea

HELCOM

EU Member States

European Commission



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Other side: small photos from left to right: Monika Stankiewicz / HELCOM, Metsähallitus, Nikolay Vlasov / HELCOM, Metsähallitus, Metsähallitus, Reetta Ljungberg / HELCOM, Metsähallitus, Metsähallitus, Metsähallitus. Big photos: Photodisk