



# HELCOM Update 2022, 2023 – and beyond

By Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary of HELCOM

BSPC Standing Committee Meeting  
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The Contracting Parties have signed the first Helsinki Convention in 1974 and updated it in 1992. The current Convention was ratified in 2000.

## The 10 Contracting Parties (CPs)



Each Contracting Party designates its own Head of Delegation as well as members of the Working Groups and of the Expert Groups and Networks



## Helsinki Convention

The set of guiding principles and obligations signed by the Contracting Parties on the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea



## HELCOM Secretariat

Coordinates the work and meetings of the Helsinki Commission and ensures CPs meet their obligations under the Helsinki Convention



## Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)

HELCOM chairmanship rotates every two years between the Contracting Parties (CPs)



### Heads of Delegation

Permanently represent the CPs and are decision-makers



### HELCOM Working Groups

Develop recommendations, policies & strategies



### Expert Groups & Networks

Provide scientific and technical underpinnings



## Decision making in HELCOM



The highest decision-making body in HELCOM is the Ministerial Meeting (the meeting of the HELCOM line ministers of each CP) that takes place every three years.



The Helsinki Commission meets annually (except when a Ministerial Meeting takes place) and is also entitled to make decisions. Its participants are designated by the CPs.



The Heads of Delegation meet twice per year and are also authorised to make decisions on behalf of the CPs.

# HELCOM tools: how we get things done



## **The Helsinki Convention**

Instrument of int. law, containing objectives & obligations. Annexes: technical guidelines and regulations.



## **Recommendations**

on measures to address areas of concern, implementable through national legislation. In total, about 260 recommendations have been adopted so far.



## **Action plans & projects**

Contain actions and measures with such as **Baltic Sea Action Plan**, Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, and most HELCOM projects.



## **Monitoring & assessments**

- Indicators (pressures on and state of the environment)
- Thematic assessments
- Holistic assessments



## **Ministerial Meetings**

Set the major strategic directions and provide the necessary political commitment.

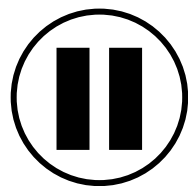


# Working arrangements since March 2022



## Unanimous decisions

Rule 8.2, from our Rules of procedure: *“Decisions of the Commission, the Heads of Delegation and the subsidiary bodies shall be taken unanimously in accordance with the Convention.”* (Russia is still part of HELCOM.)



## Strategic pause and “HELCOM 9”

Suspension of all official HELCOM meetings until further notice, upon decision by HELCOM Chairmanship in agreement with the EU and Contracting Parties that are EU members, so-called “HELCOM 9” or “H9”.



## Informal consultations

Informal consultations in the H9 format, convened by an H9 Contracting Party (not by HELCOM) take place as needed.



## Official procedures via correspondence

Official decisions that require the participation of Russia are taken via correspondence (e.g. budget, adoption of documents).



## External meetings and events


HELCOM is currently not participating in external events with Russian involvement except for meetings of the UN and similar organisations.



# Updated BSAP: Structure & goals






## Vision

-  a healthy Baltic Sea environment with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in a good ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable economic and social activities.

## Goal

-  Baltic Sea **ecosystem** is healthy and resilient

## Goals

-  Baltic Sea unaffected by **hazardous substances and litter**
-  Environmentally sustainable **sea-based activities**
-  Baltic Sea unaffected by **eutrophication**

## Horizontal topics

*Climate change; monitoring; maritime spatial planning; economic and social analysis; financing; hot spots; knowledge exchange and awareness raising*

# BSAP implementation

All 199 BSAP actions have...



... **individual target years** for their implementation, with the last actions to be implemented by 2030 at the latest;



... been assigned to one or several **HELCOM bodies** for monitoring, guiding and/or contributing to their implementation;



... **specific criteria** by which their achievement will be measured.

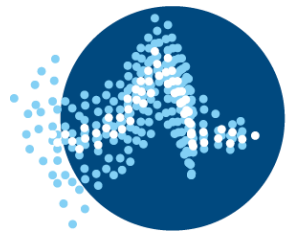
Implementation tracking



**Progress:**  
HELCOM Explorer

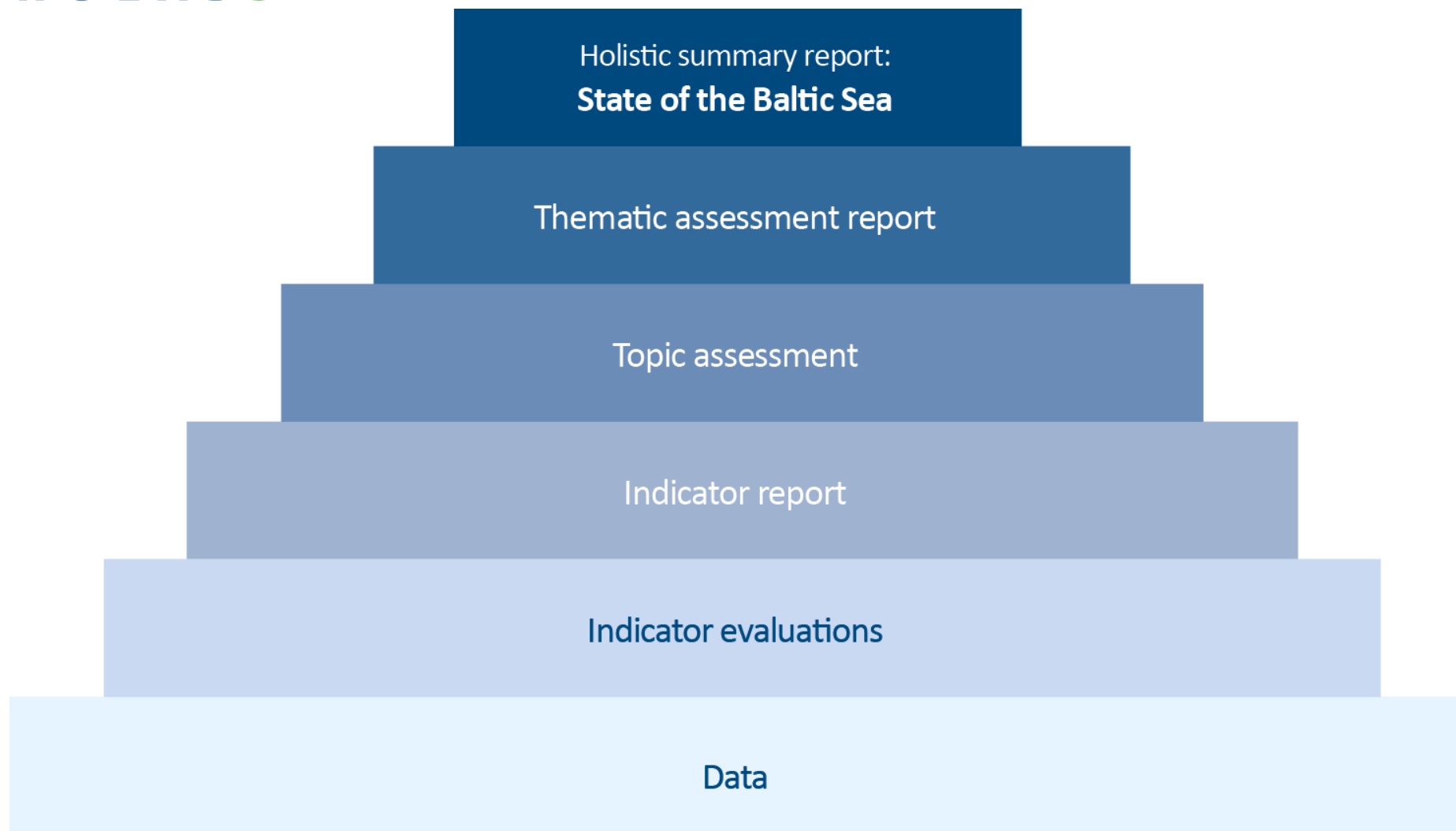


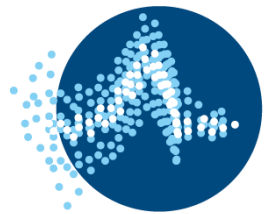
**Effects:**  
— HELCOM monitoring  
— HELCOM indicators  
— HELCOM assessments



THIRD HELCOM  
HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT  
OF THE BALTIC SEA  
2016-2021

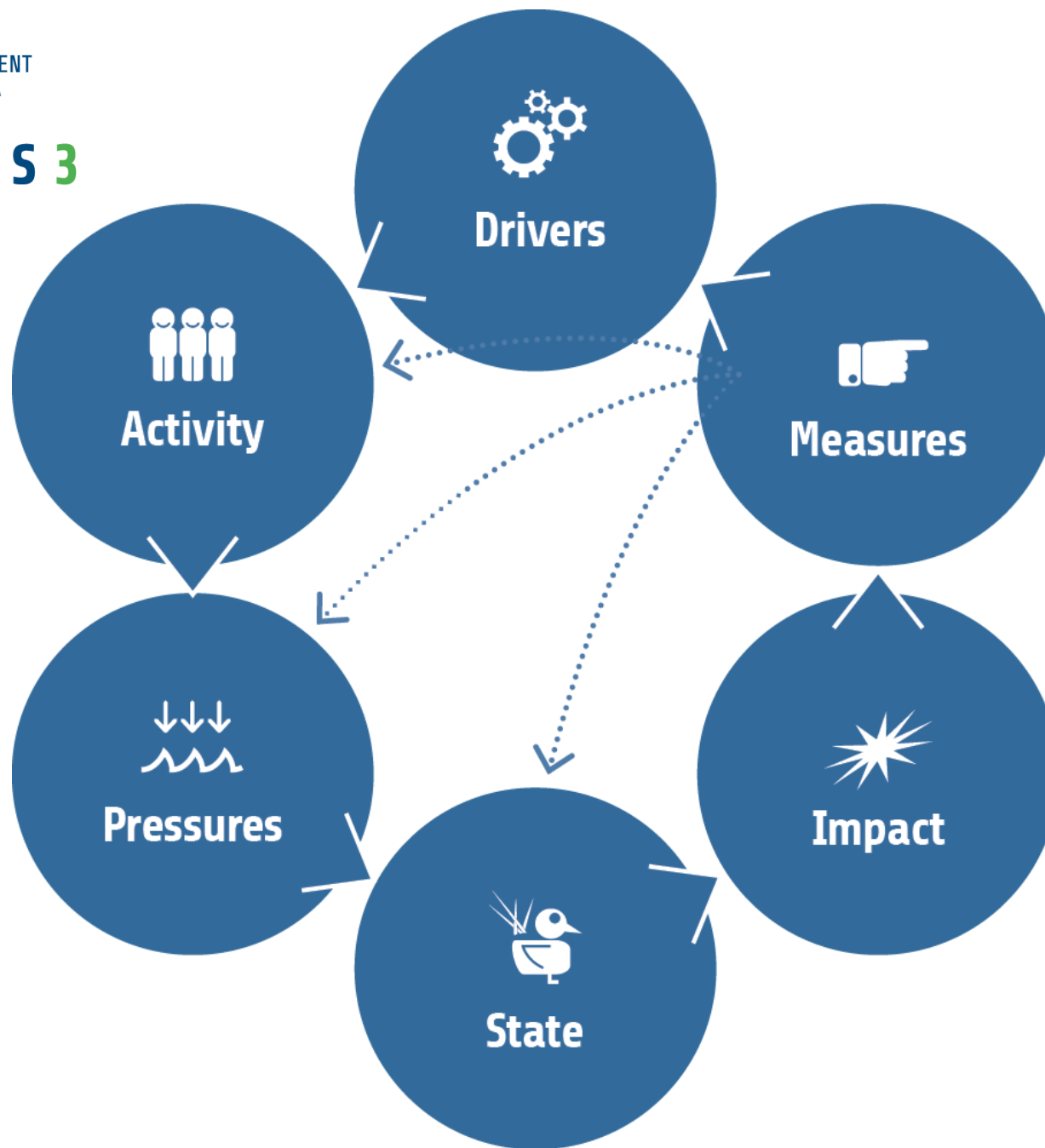
**H O L A S 3**





THIRD HELCOM  
HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT  
OF THE BALTIC SEA  
2016-2021

**HOLAS 3**



Biodiversity



Eutrophication



Hazardous  
substances



Economic and  
social analyses



Spatial pressures  
and impacts



# Projects and other processes in 2022-23 (1/2)

## **Species and biodiversity**

- HELCOM RED LIST II project
- Indicator development on bycatch, pelagic habitats, harbour porpoise (BLUES project)

## **Nutrient reduction**

- Advancing the implementation of the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy
- Assessment report: Progress towards nutrient input ceilings (NICs) achieved by 2020

## **Work on marine litter**

- Development of the global instrument to end plastic pollution by 2024
- Assessment on beach litter, indicator development on microlitter

## **Indicator website, launched in the spring 2023**



# Projects and other processes in 2022-23 (2/2)

## **Sea-based activities (shipping)**

- EMERGE project on shipping emissions in EU marine waters
- Feasibility study regarding long-term risk analysis for oil and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) pollution
- HELCOM Submerged Assessment on Warfare Materials in the Baltic Sea
- BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea

## **Reducing hazardous substances**

- HAPhazard, Pre-EMPT and BEACON projects

## **Maritime Spatial Planning & data**

- MSP and ecosystem approach/biodiversity: eMSP NBSR, MSP4BIO & PASPS
- Baltic Data Flow and ReMAP projects: better sharing and harmonization of data on marine environment, creating new data tools and models for MSP

# Cooperation with partner organizations – some examples (1/2)

- Continual exchange and/or cooperation with other global and regional frameworks and processes (EU, RSCs, global ocean agenda, post 2020 GBF)
- Work on Other Effective Area-based Measures (OECMs) and Marine Protected Areas, e.g.:
  - Cross-sectoral HELCOM workshop in February 2022, supported by the IUCN-WCPA and FAO
  - HELCOM Secretariat participation in the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5), Vancouver, Canada, February 2023
- Pioneering regional efforts to mitigate marine litter:
  - International Forum on Marine Litter and Circular Economy (MARLICE 2022), Seville, Spain, May 2022
- UN Ocean Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, June/July 2022:
  - Participation by HELCOM Secretariat
  - Side Event entitled “Delivering global commitments in the Baltic Sea Region – Marine Protected Areas and the success of Regional Seas Conventions”, hosted by Baltic Sea states.
  - New HELCOM Voluntary commitments



# Cooperation with partner organizations – some examples (2/2)

- Baltic Stakeholder Conference 2022 – Climate Change and the Baltic Sea, with Baltic Earth, September 2022, hosted by Germany
- Baltic Stakeholder Conference 2023 – implementation of the BSAP, March 2023, hosted by Latvia
- Continuing the work on hazardous submerged objects
  - e.g. Expert roundtable on dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea in December 2022, co-organized by CBSS, the German Federal Foreign Office, the German Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein, and the HELCOM H 9
- UN Water Conference, New York, USA, March 2023
  - HELCOM Commitments to UN Water Action Agenda



# Outlook beyond 2023

- HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, hosted by Latvia, scheduled for the spring of 2024
- HELCOM 50th anniversary year: 2024
- Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan as well as other commitments continue
- Restructuring of HELCOM working groups as well as updating the related TOR



# Thank you!

