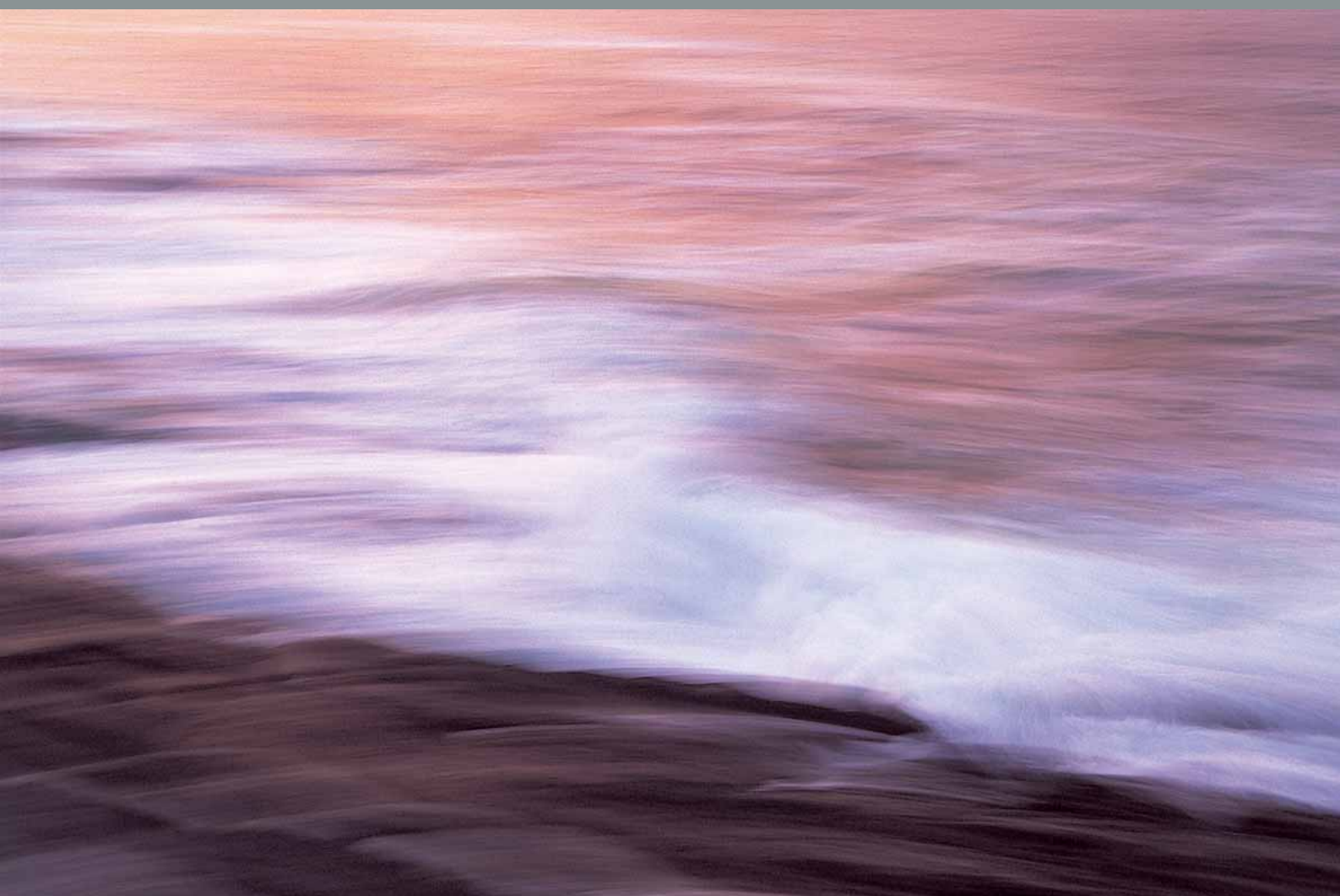


Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 96

# Activities 2003

## Overview



**Helsinki Commission**

**Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission**

# HELCOM's activities 2003–2004

## Introduction

This report summarises the activities of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) related to the protection of the Baltic marine environment over the period June 2003 to March 2004. The report reviews HELCOM's activities according to the main environmental issues, rather than on the basis of HELCOM's organisational structure.

This review also includes a description of the "Baltic Sea Regional Project", which is funded by the Global Environment Facility.

More details of HELCOM's activities, projects and publications are available at [www.helcom.fi](http://www.helcom.fi), together with background information about environmental issues related to the Baltic Sea.

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## Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings

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The list of the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings (BSEP) and the publications are available on HELCOM's website: <http://www.helcom.fi/helcom/publications.html>.

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# Foreword

The message from the Ministers and the EU Commissioner during last summer's Bremen meetings was clear: use shall be made of the efficient and well-functioning international co-operation structure that has already been established through HELCOM and only by linking all levels – the national – the Baltic – the European and the global – we will be able to come to satisfactory results.

Three recently initiated HELCOM activities are especially important in this respect.

The first activity is the revision of the monitoring and assessment programmes of HELCOM. This is not least important considering the role of HELCOM as the *environmental focal point* for the Baltic – informing about the state of the Baltic, pollution loads entering our sea and the effects to the Baltic of other human activities.

We need to ensure having the most up-to-date information about the threats and their effects on the Baltic; such as excessive inputs of nutrients causing eutrophication or hazardous substances accumulating in the food web and even presenting a risk to humans. Developments in sciences and techniques as well as requirements at the European and global level have made it necessary for HELCOM to look into how best to cater for the Baltic needs - and also how best to ensure that we disseminate assessments promptly; making it available for decision-makers.

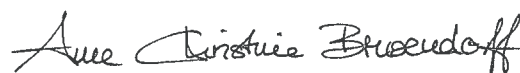
The second activity concerns the improvement of our knowledge of sources and inputs of relevant hazardous substances. This is a prerequisite to reach our HELCOM goal to phase out discharges and emissions of hazardous substances by 2020 – and to hand over a healthy Baltic Sea to the generations to come. Only when knowing which uses and inputs we have to tackle with can we start looking at the need for measures and the adequate fora to address this.

The third activity is to set up a frame for HELCOM's future policy goals by creating a balance between the ecosystem health that we want and the human influences that we will accept. In order to get broader stakeholder participation – but also very importantly to bring together the views of managers and scientists – HELCOM will create Ecological Quality Objectives with the aim:

- to provide tools to check the health of the Baltic Sea in an understandable and holistic way;
- to indicate whether decided management measures are effective; and
- to complement the requirements under the EU Water Framework Directive of "good ecological status".

It is of crucial importance to HELCOM's future well-being that we are able to show the relevance of our activities to the outside world to obtain support for the implementation of our strategies and objectives. This support can be either in the form of funding or in the form of support and recognition from the public, the politicians and other international fora, of what HELCOM is doing and the special needs to cater for the Baltic Sea area.

It is my hope that this publication will provide you with an overview of HELCOM's activities and that keeping in mind our dependence on the Baltic Sea and the need to co-operate to reach common goals we will together be able to strive to obtain a healthy Baltic Sea.



Anne Christine Brusendorff

Executive Secretary of the Helsinki Commission



# 1. Future role of HELCOM and its organizational structure

The 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Helsinki Commission approved the future role of HELCOM and its organizational structure.

The overall objective of HELCOM, as described in the Convention, is to restore and protect the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea thereby obtaining a sustainable balance between human activities in river basins and in the open sea and the requirements of healthy aquatic ecosystems.

The vision for the future is 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 human economics and social activities. HELCOM will focus its work to the fields where added value can be obtained and avoid duplication of work done in other fora. This means that HELCOM will function as a guardian of the Baltic Sea by co-ordinating actions and initiatives on the basis of information on the status of the Baltic marine environment.

The overall role of HELCOM is as:

- an environmental policy-maker for the Baltic Sea area for developing common environmental objectives and actions;
- an environmental focal point providing information about (i) the state of/trends in the marine environment, (ii) the efficiency of measures to protect it and (iii) common initiatives and positions which can form the basis for decision-making in other international fora;
- a body for developing, for the specific needs of the Baltic Sea, Recommendations of its own and Recommendations supplementary to measures imposed by other international organisations;
- a supervisory body dedicated to ensure that HELCOM environmental standards are fully implemented by all parties throughout the Baltic Sea and its catchment area; and
- a co-ordinating body ascertaining multilateral response in case of major maritime incidents.

The more specific tasks of HELCOM are:

- to act as a catalyst identifying actions of priority within the region;

- to act as partner in the development and implementation of the European Marine Strategy to ensure that this strategy will complement and work to achieve the HELCOM objectives;
- to co-ordinate its work and co-operate with other international organizations at global, and regional (Baltic) level to ensure synergism and complementarity with working programmes of the different organizations as well as to through these organizations promote common HELCOM initiatives and proposals.

HELCOM's future activities will be based on the ecosystem approach, for which Ecological Quality Objectives shall be developed. Within this ecosystem approach the following areas are set as the priorities for HELCOM's future work:

- monitoring and assessment;
- nature conservation and biodiversity;
- eutrophication;
- hazardous substances; and
- safety of navigation and response activities

The measures of HELCOM will be based on the fundamental principles and obligations described in the Convention, such as the Precautionary Principle, Best Environmental Practice and Best Available Technology and the "Polluter pays" principle. When identifying environmental measures a sub-regional approach will be applied taking into account the aspects of cost-effectiveness. The management approach of HELCOM will also take advantage of the DPSIR conceptual framework, i.e., Driving forces (activities), Pressures (input), States (quality), Impacts (effects) and Responses (actions and measures).

## Working structure of HELCOM

The policy and strategy of HELCOM shall be decided during the regular annual meeting of HELCOM based on proposals from the Heads of Delegation. The role of the Heads of Delegation is to discuss in more detail proposals for the policy and strategy as well as to supervise the implementation of the existing policy.

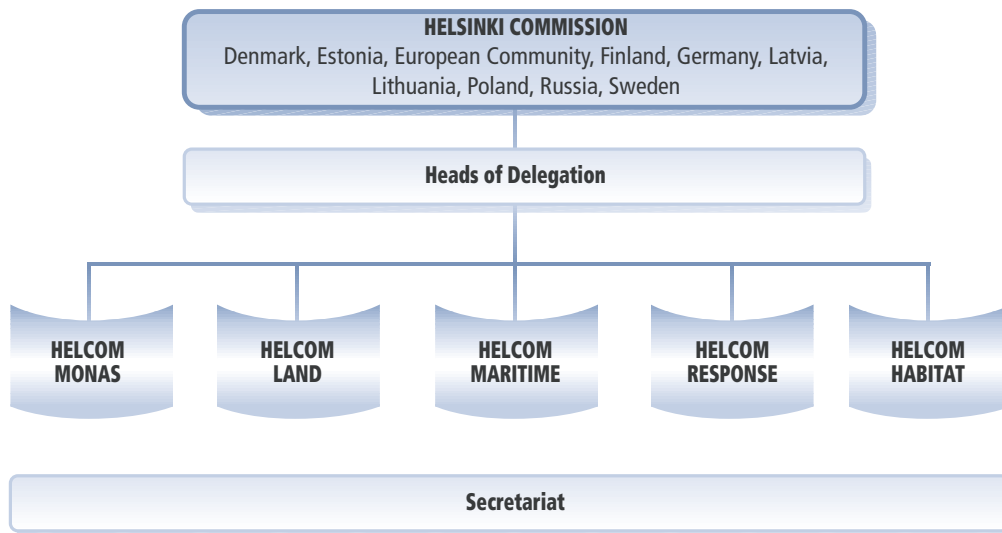
The HELCOM work will be carried out in following working groups:

- The Monitoring and Assessment Group;
- The Land-based Pollution Group;
- The Nature Protection and Biodiversity Group;
- The Maritime Group; and
- The Response Group.

The working groups shall implement the decided policies and strategies and put forward proposals for decision and discussion at the meetings of the Heads of Delegation.

In terms of working arrangements, special attention will be given to interlinkages of the work carried out by the permanent working groups and to the intersessional work.

### Structure of Helcom



## 2. EcoQOs – Building an integrative and holistic strategy by defining ecological quality and applying the ecosystem approach

Introducing the ecosystem approach for setting especially tailored ecological quality objectives (EcoQOs) for the Baltic Sea has become a priority for HELCOM and for this purpose a specific EcoQO Project has been set up. The project aims to build a firm foundation of understanding and participation between scientists, managers and stakeholders in the process of developing operational EcoQOs.

EcoQOs provide a useful link in the interpretation of conceptual language, such as *“restore ecological balance”*, towards specific points that can be practically interpreted and applied. To set effective EcoQOs they will need to reflect the core of information on the ecosystem, with a balance between the basic ecosystem properties on one hand and human influence on the other. EcoQOs will provide the Baltic Sea region with the tools for setting “measurable” future policy goals and a means to evaluate management outcomes.

The project has already received funding from the HELCOM budget and Germany. To continue its work the project has applied for funding from the EC, due to begin in March 2004 for a year. Since its start, the project has finalised a pilot project with

a workshop, providing the appropriate direction to begin EcoQO development. To build on this, the project has formed close ties with the newly established Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP), which ICES forms integral part of. In addition, it has been involved with HELCOM’s PLC and fish monitoring workshops, receiving good input and suggestions for indicators that EcoQOs could be based on. eMeetings, an easy-to-use internet-based discussion forum, has also been set up. This interactive forum has allowed for a larger audience of managers, scientists and stakeholders to get involved in discussing and commenting on the project’s ongoing work. For HELCOM to develop truly effective objectives an important characteristic is that EcoQOs are easily understood by their end-user. For this purpose the project has produced a short video animation called “Lord of the Things”, which is intended to get a new generation of stakeholders interested and involved in HELCOM’s work in setting clear understandable objectives for the future of our common sea.

For more up-to-date information visit: [http://www.helcom.fi/environment/ecoqo\\_project.html](http://www.helcom.fi/environment/ecoqo_project.html).

### 3. Environmental monitoring and reporting

HELCOM provides scientifically reliable information on the state of the Baltic marine environment through up-to-date assessment products based on co-ordinated monitoring programmes. Over the last year, HELCOM has updated the indicator fact sheet reports, which provide an overview of the state of the Baltic marine environment. HELCOM has also recently published two environmental assessments quantifying the sources and inputs of waterborne and airborne nutrients and hazardous substances. Additionally, reports have been published on the validation of algorithms for chlorophyll retrieval from satellite data to promote remote sensing in monitoring, and on a taxonomic phytoplankton checklist to improve the quality assurance of monitoring.

#### HELCOM's monitoring and assessment procedures to be modernised

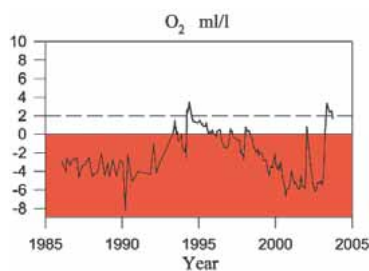
As a focal point for the gathering of environmental information on the Baltic Sea, HELCOM has a central role in the monitoring and assessment of the state of the whole Baltic Sea area. HELCOM's environmental monitoring has been operational since the 1970s. This work should be continued but improved, to provide the necessary data for new assessment products covering pressures from the catchment area, and their impacts in the coastal and open marine environment. HELCOM has established a special project to revise monitoring and assessment procedures in order to take advantage of scientific and technological innovations, and to come into line with the EU Water Framework Directive and the planned pan-European and global assessment processes. A new data and information strategy adopted by HELCOM 25/2004, marks a start of a new era in data exchange and widens access to HELCOM's environmental data.

#### New oxygen from the North Sea refreshes deep basins

The major oceanographic event in the Baltic Sea last year was the termination of a long stagnation period by a major inflow of saline North Sea - Kattegat water in January 2003, followed by

smaller inflows in March, May and September. The intrusion of over 200 km<sup>3</sup> of cold, salty and well-oxygenated water increased near-bottom salinity in the Mecklenburg Bay to the highest values ever recorded. The whole of the Bornholm Basin, the Hanö Bight and the Gdansk Deep were oxygenated, with the Gotland Deep showing remarkable oxygen content below 200 metres.

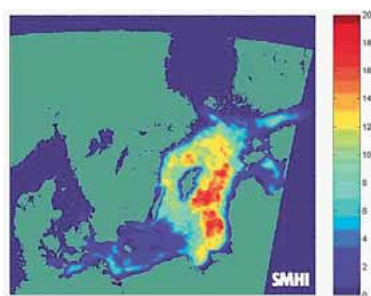
The western Gotland Basin was not influenced by these inflows, and the deeper layers of the Fåro Deep remained completely anoxic. In the Gulf of Finland, no improvement in oxygen conditions could be seen, and in late summer low oxygen levels were observed in deep waters almost throughout the Gulf.



**Long time-series of oxygen concentration in bottom water in the Gotland Deep. The solid line represents the amount of oxygen in the water (ml/l). The negative concentrations below zero indicate the presence of toxic hydrogen sulphide. Oxygen concentrations below 2 ml/l (broken line) are considered to be too low for macroscopic animals such as fish to survive. Source SMHI.**

Even though the salt water intrusion brought oxygen into the deep bottoms, several coastal areas suffered from oxygen depletion due to eutrophication. In the inner Gulf of Gdansk and the Szczecin Lagoon, for example, incidents of severe oxygen deficiency occurred in August 2003 in near-bottom waters. Low oxygen levels were also observed in near-bottom water in the Lübeck Bay and the German waters of the Pomeranian Bay.

Spring phytoplankton blooms and late summer blue-green algal blooms were intense, indicating that excessive amounts of nutrients are available for primary producers.



The occurrence of blue-green algal surface accumulations in the Baltic Sea during 2003, expressed as the number of days with surface blooms. The data is based on satellite images. Source: SMHI.

More information on the state of the Baltic Sea and HELCOM indicators is available on the HELCOM website:

<http://www.helcom.fi/environment/baltic2003.html> and

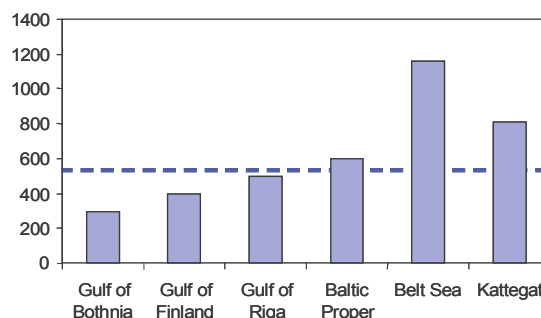
<http://www.helcom.fi/environment/indicators2003.html>

### Atmospheric deposition of nitrogen and hazardous substances

In 2003, the two Meteorological Synthesizing Centres, EMEP MSC-East and EMEP MSC-West, finalised the sixth joint summary report for HELCOM, on the atmospheric inputs of nitrogen, lead, cadmium, mercury and lindane entering the Baltic Sea in 2001.

The main emission sources of the oxidised nitrogen deposition entering the Baltic Sea include sources in Germany and Poland, and shipping on the Baltic Sea itself. It should be noted, however, that more distant emission sources, such as the United Kingdom, France and shipping on the North Sea have also made significant contributions to this deposition. For reduced nitrogen, local emission sources are more important. The main contributors to reduced nitrogen deposition are Germany, Poland and Denmark.

The total annual atmospheric deposition of nitrogen into the Baltic Sea amounted to 223,800 tonnes.



Annual deposition fluxes of total nitrogen to the Baltic Sea sub-basins in 2001. Unit: mg m<sup>-2</sup> year<sup>-1</sup>. The broken line represents the average value for the whole Baltic Sea.

The total annual atmospheric deposition of cadmium entering the Baltic Sea amounted to about 8 tonnes, mercury deposition 3 tonnes, and lead deposition 143 tonnes. HELCOM countries contributed about 40-50% of the deposition of heavy metals into the Baltic Sea in 2001. Among the HELCOM countries, the main contributions came from Poland, Germany, and Russia. For mercury essential contribution to depositions comparing to other countries belongs also to Denmark. Contributions of individual European countries outside the Baltic Sea region amounted to 5-10% of totals. Other significant contributions originate from inputs of re-emissions, and natural sources.

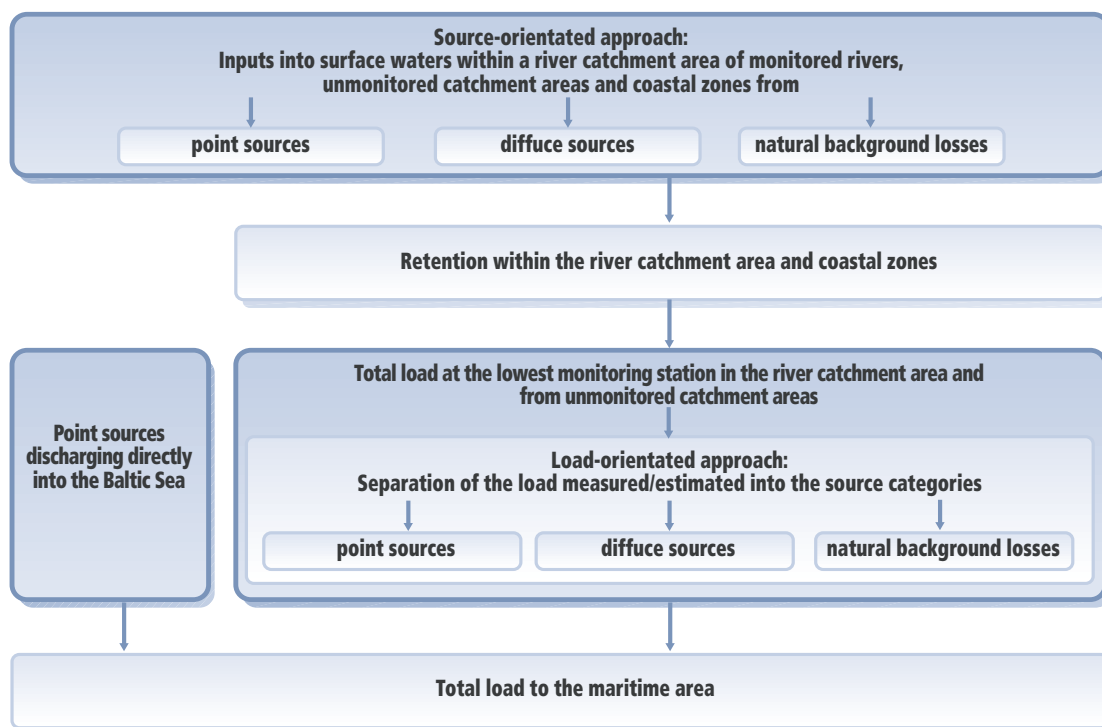
For more information, see:

<http://www.emep.int/helcom2003/index.html>.

### Assessing the waterborne pollution load entering the Baltic Sea

Every five years the overall pollution load of nutrients, organic matter and heavy metals entering the Baltic Sea via rivers or via direct discharges from pollution sources located on the coastline is assessed. The fourth such compilation, Fourth Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-4), concerns figures for 2000. In this compilation also the discharges from point sources and losses from diffuse sources throughout the territories of the HELCOM Contracting Parties within the Baltic Sea catchment area were for the first time quantified in order to determine the relative significance of different sources of pollution.





#### Classification of inputs considered in PLC-4

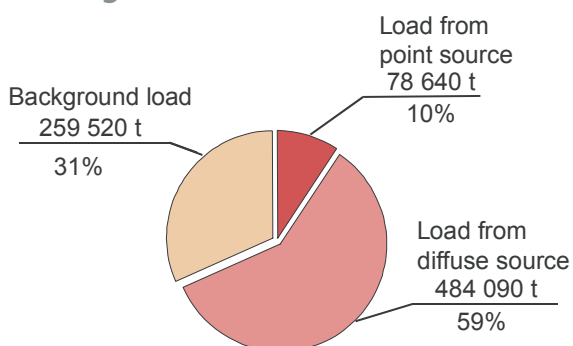
The total waterborne loads entering the Baltic Sea from rivers and coastal areas amounted to 738,000 tonnes for nitrogen and 34,100 tonnes for phosphorus in 2000. The total BOD<sub>7</sub> load amounted to 1,103,000 tonnes. A full picture could not be obtained of the heavy metal loads entering the Baltic Sea, due to the lack of sufficient data.

When comparing riverine inputs over the period 1994-2000, the influence of varying river flow rates was such a strong determining factor that no clear trends could be observed for nutrient loads. Heavy metal inputs are not so dependent on flow rates. During

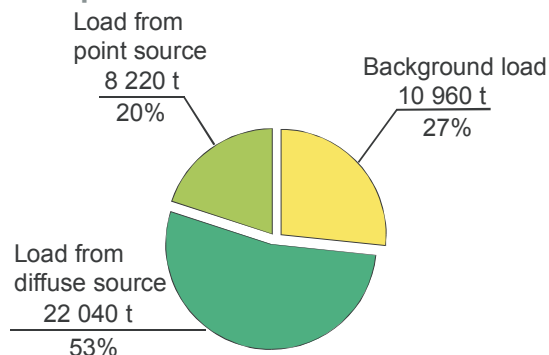
the period 1994-2000, riverine loads of heavy metals decreased for almost all the Contracting Parties.

The figures from the different sources within the catchment area show that the major portions of losses and discharges of total nitrogen and total phosphorous originated from diffuse sources. Natural background losses of nitrogen and phosphorus amounted to a little less than one third of the total losses and discharges entering inland surface waters within the Baltic Sea catchment area. The load from point sources amounted to 10 % for nitrogen and 20 % for phosphorus.

#### Nitrogen : 822 000 t



#### Phosphorus : 41 200 t



Distribution of point source discharges, losses from diffuse sources and natural background losses of N<sub>total</sub> and P<sub>total</sub> into inland surface waters within the Baltic Sea catchment area in 2000 based on the Source-oriented approach.

## 4. Combating eutrophication and hazardous substances

Most of the pollution entering the Baltic comes from the sea's own catchment area and HELCOM has agreed that further action on eutrophication and hazardous substances will be needed to combat land-based pollution in the Baltic Sea region also after the EU enlargement in spring 2004.

### Scenarios on inputs

In order to ensure that adequate measures are taken to combat eutrophication, HELCOM has specifically pointed to the use of tools to assess the implications of different policy scenarios on nutrient inputs, and the resulting eutrophication status of the Baltic Sea and specific sub-regions. HELCOM has initiated an activity where current modelling tools may be used to simulate the impact of the implementation of the EU Common Agriculture Policy and other policies in the Baltic Sea area. Based on the existing regulations, and the extent to which they have been implemented, HELCOM may consider the need for additional measures, and examine where these measures could be implemented most cost-effectively.

### Strategy for hazardous substances data collection

HELCOM has initiated a project on the development of a strategy to collect data on the occurrence of hazardous substances in markets and in use in the Baltic Sea region. Improved knowledge about the sources and inputs of hazardous substances is a prerequisite to achieving the ultimate goals of the HELCOM strategy to phase out discharges and emissions of hazardous substances by 2020. Controls on chemicals and the protection of the marine and freshwater environment have so far been treated as separate policy areas, with each country or region using their traditional instruments to obtain information on the production, use, release and environmental occurrence of hazardous substances. However, the various data collection and assessment activities have not yet been able to provide a comprehensive integrated basis

for decision-makers and the public on the impacts of chemicals in social and environmental terms.

In order to make the best use of the available resources and to get appropriate information to target policy measures and to monitor target achievements, the available tools should be combined in a more integrated approach. The project aims to achieve this by reviewing the available approaches in the Baltic region and developing a basis for a common strategy for collecting data on chemicals in society and the environment, focussing on substances included in HELCOM Recommendation 19/5 on HELCOM's objective with regard to hazardous substances.

The project also promotes institutional strengthening by involving the relevant authorities and stakeholders in the various countries, and enhancing their capability to meet the provisions of national and international obligations. The project will particularly focus on the situation in Russia.

### Pollution Hot Spot deletions continue

Three Polish Hot Spots have been deleted from the HELCOM List of Hot Spots – two wastewater treatment plants in Koszalin and in Krakow, and a chemical plant in Wroclaw.

Another encouraging event related to the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme was granting of the Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award in August 2003 to the former hot spot Frantschach Swiecie SA – a pulp and paper plant in Poland. This award recognises notable positive contributions towards environmental improvements in the Baltic Sea, and at the presentation of the Award it was stated that: "Through facility improvements utilising best available technologies (BAT), Frantschach Swiecie achieved considerable reductions in pollutants discharged to the Vistula River and the Baltic Sea." Frantschach Swiecie SA was deleted from the hot spots list in 2002.

## 5. Maintaining the ecological balance

### Improving the network of Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs)

In order to speed up the implementation of the network of BSPAs, HELCOM has established a new two-step reporting procedure for HELCOM Recommendation 15/5. HELCOM will also develop joint activities and organize training seminars/courses on the management of marine protected areas, while encouraging collaboration on the protection of BSPAs between countries that share an offshore BSPA.

### Promoting sustainable development by encouraging regional Integrated Coastal Zone Management

To promote integrated coastal zone management in the Baltic Sea area, HELCOM is actively co-operating with Baltic 21 and VASAB 2010 to gain synergies. To facilitate the integration of Integrated Coastal Zone Management procedures into national sustainable development strategies, HELCOM, Baltic 21 and VASAB 2010 jointly organised the first Baltic Sea Region ICZM Platform meeting. This Platform will exchange experiences and facilitate dialogue on common coastal problems, while pooling information and expertise, facilitating access to relevant indicators, and efficiently increasing awareness.

## 6. Audiovisual production “The Baltic – A Sea of Change”

In accordance with the HELCOM Information and Communication Strategy identifying the goals to elaborate strategies for increasing political and public interest in the Baltic Sea environment, and to enhance the environmental awareness, an audiovisual production “The Baltic – A Sea of Change” was published. The production was funded by the EU, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and HELCOM.

“The Baltic – A Sea of Surprises” consists of four ten-minute films, designed to be useful for educational purposes presenting the unique landscapes and nature of the Baltic Sea but also examining how this sensitive area is affected by pollution. The films are available from the HELCOM Secretariat or can be downloaded at: [http://www.helcom.fi/environment/sea\\_of\\_surprises.html](http://www.helcom.fi/environment/sea_of_surprises.html).

A radio series “The Baltic – A Sea of Change” covers Poland and Lithuania as well as St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad areas. The radio programmes are available at: <http://www.helcom.fi/radio/radio.htm>.

# 7. Improving navigational safety

Following the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration (2001) and the Joint IMO/EU/HELCOM Workshop in Warnemünde (2003), four expert working groups were established to look in more detail into the areas of major interest concerning navigational safety.

## Recommendation for navigation in ice finalised

The Expert Working Group on ICE was established to look into the need and opportunity for establishing measures to ensure the safety of winter navigation, with Finland acting as lead country. The Expert Working Group held four meetings in 2003, analysing various risks related to winter navigation in the Baltic Sea and agreed on a draft HELCOM Recommendation.

The draft HELCOM Recommendation was adopted by the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Helsinki Commission in March 2004.

The new Recommendation contains guidelines for the safety of winter navigation in the Baltic Sea. These guidelines include provisions for establishing adequate ice surveillance systems, the equivalence of ice classification rules and safety requirements for ships sailing in icy conditions, while also giving guidance on operational matters related to winter navigation in the Baltic Sea.

## New tools to support navigation-related risk management

Important work has also been going on in the Expert Working Group for the Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS data, which was established to support the implementation of the decision of the HELCOM Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen in 2001 to establish land-based AIS monitoring systems for shipping by 1 July 2005. The Automatic Identification System (AIS) is an automatic VHF radio-based system which will enable the authorities to identify the name, position, course, speed, draught and cargo of every ship of more than 300 gross tonnes sailing in the Baltic Sea. This will greatly improve risk management and facilitate decisions on new measures to prevent collisions and improve navigational safety.



**Images based on AIS information show the current positions of ships in the Baltic Sea. This map only includes ships in waters presently covered by land-based AIS stations.**

A special "HELCOM server" will additionally receive AIS information every six minutes, in order to support the production of general reports and maps on shipping in the Baltic, and to support the decision-making process for additional measures to increase the safety of navigation.



**AIS maps contain information on the routes of many ships sailing in the same waters.**

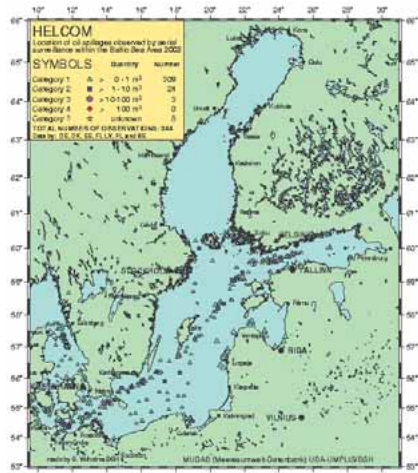
## Further measures under development

The Expert Working Groups on Pilotage and Transit Routeing have been analysing the needs and opportunities for additional routeing and pilotage measures for certain kinds of ships in the Baltic, but these discussions have not been finalised. The Pilotage Group is expected to deliver draft conclusions in May 2004. The Transit Routeing Group has decided that there is a need to carry out IMO formal safety assessment proce-

dures before deciding on possible routing measures for tankers in the Baltic Sea.

### More online information on port waste reception facilities

A new information system on port waste reception facilities was launched in January 2004. This system provides easy online access to information for the shipping industry on the possibilities to deliver ship-generated waste in around 100 ports in Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. This measure contributes to the full implementation of the Baltic Strategy and the elimination of illegal discharges from ships.

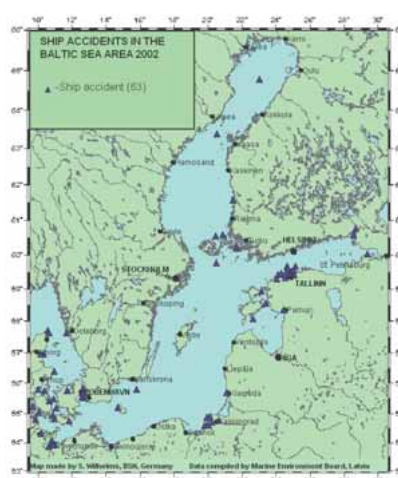


**Oil spillages observed by aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea area 2002.**

The system has been developed within the Danish Programme for Co-operation for the Environment in Eastern Europe (DANCEE), and is based at the Secretariat of the Helsinki Commission in Finland. The participating ports update the relevant information as required, thus openly promoting their services. In addition to providing information on reception facilities for different types of ship-generated waste, their capacity and financial conditions, the system offers a possibility for ships to notify the port about their intention to deliver waste. This should help to ensure the availability of the relevant capacities in the port. Furthermore, this information system provides the national authorities and international organisations with an overview of the implementation of the agreed policies.

### Testing readiness to respond to oil accidents at sea

Over 20 ships from Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Russia and Sweden, one aircraft and more than 50 observers from the Baltic coastal countries participated in the BALEX DELTA Exercise held in Helsinki, Finland, in September 2003. To simulate a large spill of 10,000 tonnes of crude oil at open sea, about 60 cubic metres of peat were spilled.



**Ship accidents in the Baltic Sea area 2002.**

BALEX DELTA 2003 was a great success, especially concerning the good communications and co-operation among the strike teams, which were made up of mixed national units. In a real operation, it is estimated that the major part of a corresponding oil spillage would have been recovered within 3-5 days in fair weather conditions.

BALEX DELTA exercises are a vital part of the preparations for a real accident where rapid actions are essential and there is no time for prior discussions on common procedures for reporting and communications, acquiring assistance or how to work together at the accident scene.

BALEX DELTA oil spill response exercises have been held annually since 1989. Over this period HELCOM has steadily improved the readiness of the countries around the Baltic to jointly respond to an oil spill at sea. The countries around the Baltic now have a total of more than 30 response vessels ready to operate anywhere in the Baltic.

## 8. Preparing new and harmonising existing HELCOM Recommendations

The following Recommendations were adopted by the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of HELCOM in March 2004:

- *A revised HELCOM Recommendation 23/3 on enhancing the use of pilots in Route T and the Sound by notification to departing ships and establishment of an early warning system.* The recommendation establishes a system whereby ships, covered by an IMO resolution on the recommended use of pilots in Route T and the Sound, are informed about the recommendation to use pilots. In addition, the recommendation establishes a system to verify how many ships are complying with the IMO recommendation and to be able to contact those ships who are not complying. The revision of HELCOM Recommendation 23/3 was necessary following the revision in IMO of the resolution on the recommended use of pilots in Route T and the Sound.
- *Guidelines on granting exceptions for pleasure craft according to Paragraph D of Regulation 5 to the Helsinki Convention.* The guidelines specifies the criteria for when to exempt pleasure craft, built before 1 January 2000, from the sewage discharge requirements, including the requirement to install retention systems for sewage as contained in the Helsinki Convention.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/1 on the elimination of PCBs and PCTs:* The recommendation improves existing regulations by including applications with small amounts of PCBs which may add up to large amounts in total, and by extending coverage to the PCBs/PCTs in demolition waste.
- *An “umbrella” HELCOM Recommendation 25/2 on industrial activities on the effective use of Best Available Techniques:* The recommendation unifies permitting principles in all the Contracting States and provides concise information on Best Available Techniques, including achievable emission levels for particularly hazardous substances.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/3 on reduction of nutrients and other pollutants leaching from forestry land.* The recommendation is an outcome of the harmonization project merging the old Recommendation 20/3 concerning reduction of nutrients and pollutants leaching from forestry with Recommendation 16/11 on the use of pesticides in forestry.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/4 on measures aimed at the reduction of discharges from fresh water and marine fish farming:* The recommendation combines two earlier recommendations on marine and inland fish farms into a single recommendation with more stringent requirements on nutrient discharges.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/5 on assessment of the need for escort towing in tanker transport routes to prevent accidents in the Baltic Sea area.* The recommendation includes requirements to carry out before 1 July 2006 an evaluation on the need for escort towing services for laden oil and chemical tankers for main tanker transport routes where a failure of propulsion or steering of a tanker is likely to cause a severe pollution incident.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/6 on guidelines for the recommended minimum throughput of oil filtering equipment on board ships.* Following the decisions of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee HELCOM Recommendation 14/6 is superseded by this recommendation in order to promote and accelerate the introduction of new oil filtering technologies on board of ships.
- *HELCOM Recommendation 25/7 on safety of winter navigation in the Baltic Sea area.* The recommendation contains requirements for the safety of winter navigation in the Baltic Sea area.

## 9. Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP) up and running

HELCOM is managing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP) in co-operation with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission (IBSFC) and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

The BSRP provides a framework for managing the delicate environment of the Baltic Sea and restoring its ecological balance. The project activities involve local communities and institutions, working together with the project partners and other international organisations to restore marine ecosystems and prevent further damage to the Baltic Sea.

The main goal of the project is to strengthen the technical capacity of local and regional institutions to manage valuable marine resources and to ensure that Baltic ecosystems are sustainable. These environmental activities bring the Baltic Sea countries together inland, along the coast, and out on the open sea. The project will improve the management of all relevant activities by introducing *an ecosystem approach*.

The project has four main components which include Large Marine Ecosystem Management, Land and Coastal Zone Management, Institutional Strengthening and Regional Capacity Building and the Project Management component.

The activities within these components complement the overall goals and activities of HELCOM by helping to establish the Ecological Quality Objectives and working towards reducing inputs of nutrients and pollution. Institutional Strengthening and Regional Capacity Building activities will also help to strengthen the links between national, regional and global levels.

The BSRP has been designed according to the principles of the Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) concept, which is part of an international effort to improve coastal environments and reduce pollution around the world. The World Bank, on behalf of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has provided a \$5.5 million grant for the Baltic Sea Regional Project. The Grant became effective on May 31, 2003. Phase 1 of the Project is expected to run until 2006. Contributions from other co-financiers and

project beneficiaries including Finland, Norway, Sweden, the United States and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) may bring the total funds available to more than \$12 million.

An informal commencement meeting was held in October 2003 to facilitate the common understanding of the terms of implementation and co-operation among the Project partners, as well as to consider technical and political matters related to implementation of the project.

A Project Implementation Team (PIT) has been established within the HELCOM Secretariat, contracts have been signed with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) for co-ordination of component 1, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) for co-ordination of component 2, and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), who is responsible for the Agri-Environmental Credit Scheme.

For component 1 (Large Marine Ecosystem Management), the centres for the overall co-ordination of the activities within the productivity, environmental health, fish and fisheries, and socio-economic modules have been created in the key institutions of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia together with a series of lead laboratories. Scientific advice necessary to support the management units is being generated by four specific Study Groups arranged under the ICES Baltic Committee.

For component 2 (Land and Coastal Zone Management), three Local Implementation Units (LIUs) have been established in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Kick-off co-ordination meetings have been conducted providing detailed discussions and planning with the LIUs. One-day procurement training courses have been arranged as part of these meetings thereby preparing the LIU staff for the activities - in particular under the project's Agri-Environmental Credit Scheme.

All general information about the project and its progress is available for the public on the Project website (<http://www.helcom.fi/helcom/projectsmeetings/GEF-BSRP.html>). The website also has links to the project partners' websites, where more detailed information about the different components is available.



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