

# **Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM):**

## **Extent of marine litter problem and its current status**

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**International Conference on Prevention and  
Management of Marine Litter in European Seas**

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# Baltic Sea

## Natural features:

- a young, shallow, semi enclosed sea
- low water exchange rate
- brackish water
- low temperature
- a harsh environment for species to live in
- low number of species
- sensitive to external pressures, including marine litter

## 9 Coastal States

Catchment area: + 4 countries

85 million people



# HELCOM – four decades of cooperation

**Priorities** for work derived from the status assessments and the Baltic Sea Action Plan:

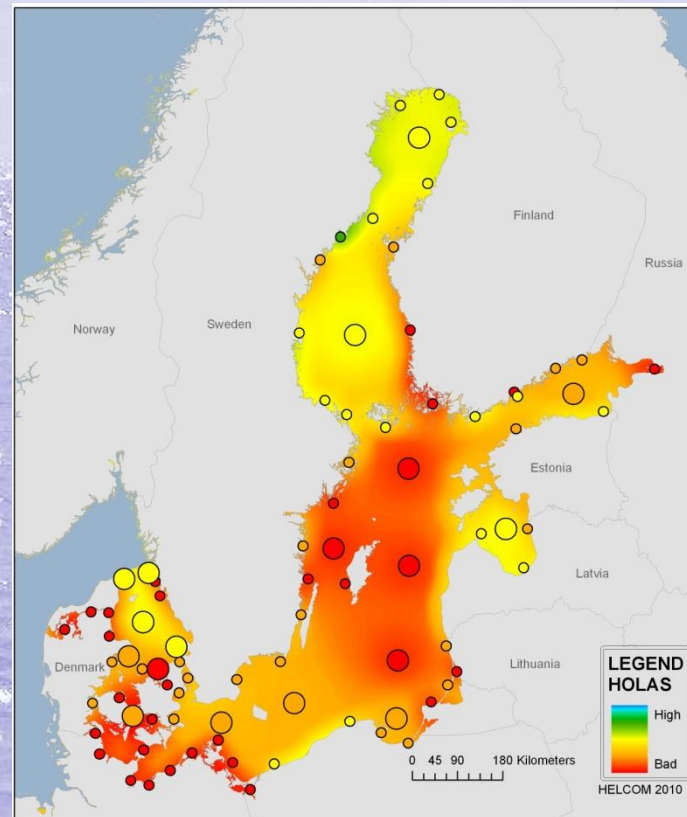
- eutrophication
- hazardous substances
- maritime activities
- loss of biological diversity, destruction of habitats

## **Mandate**

- pollution prevention from all sources: land, sea, airborne
- nature conservation
- safety of navigation

**But what about marine litter?**

**Ecosystem health status of the entire sea was impaired in 2003-2007 (HOLAS)**



# Marine litter in the Baltic Sea

## Building on existing frameworks

Extensive legal, policy and cooperation framework in place:

- **Helsinki Convention:** prohibition of dumping (Art. 11); prevention of pollution from ships (Annex V), incl. pleasure crafts
- **HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan:** beach clean-up operations, “Fishing for Litter” initiatives; raising awareness; delivery of marine litter onshore
- **HELCOM GEAR group** on the implementation of the ecosystem approach, to allow for information exchange and coordination of national implementation activities according to Article 6 of MSFD
- Extensive network of **HELCOM Observers** (50!) e.g. KIMO International, European Boating Association, WWF Baltic, major shipping and ports organizations, etc.



# Marine litter in the Baltic Sea

## Examples of measures

### At sea:

- MARPOL (Annex V and IV) Special Area for garbage and sewage
- Baltic Strategy for reception facilities for ship-generated wastes
- Recommendation 28E/10 on “no-special-fee” extended to marine litter caught in fishing nets

### On land:

- Over 40 HELCOM Recommendations: proper waste handling & limiting discharges at source (industry, sewage, agriculture)
- Hot spots programme (1992-2012) – 109 out of 162 cleaned-up
- Recommendation 29/2 on beach litter monitoring
- Pilot activities to sample plastics in sewage (St. Petersburg WWTP, BASE project)

**HELCOM/UNEP/GPA report** on marine litter in the Baltic (2007)

- > A lack of data on sources, presence and impacts of marine litter and thus no full overview of the scale of the problem



# Upcoming opportunities for better addressing marine litter in the Baltic



- **Filling in knowledge gaps**
  - Research e.g. BONUS coordinated research programme
  - Ongoing revision of the joint regional marine monitoring
- **New measures & actions**
  - enforcement & full implementation of the existing requirements
  - targeted measures to close the loopholes & emerging issues (microplastics)
  - clean up activities and public awareness
- **Indicator and target setting**
  - HELCOM CORESET + European experience (MSFD)
- **HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 3 October 2013 Copenhagen**
  - > Outcome of this Conference to be fed into the negotiations of the HELCOM Ministerial commitments



**Thank you and see you at**

**HELCOM**

**MINISTERIAL MEETING  
COPENHAGEN, 3 OCTOBER 2013**

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