



The current state of the Baltic Sea

and the tools at our disposal to improve the situation of the marine environment

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Executive Secretary of HELCOM

Annual Event of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020
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The Baltic Sea



Unique but fragile ecosystem



Catchment area:
4x area of the sea



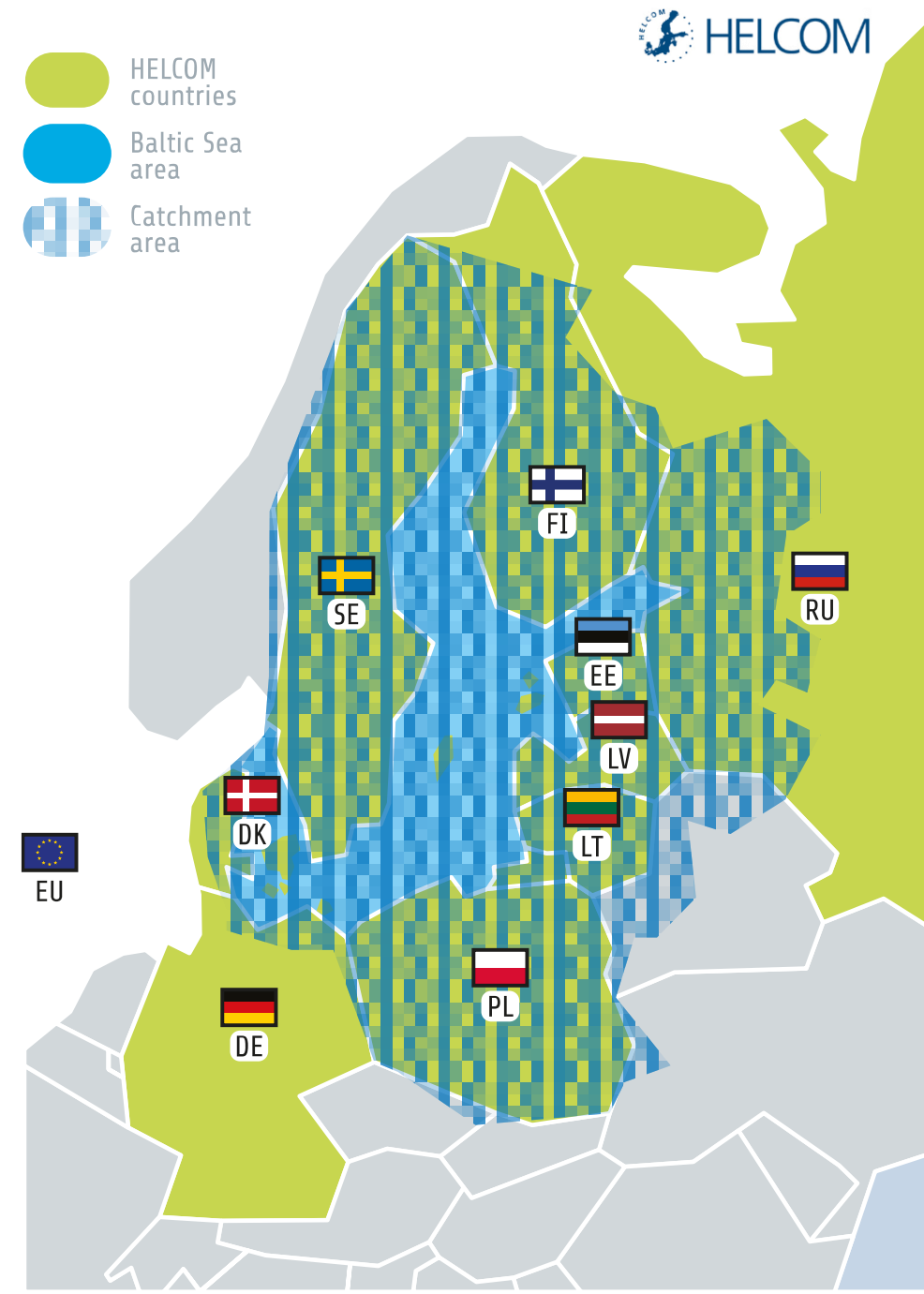
Population (catchment):
85 million



Busy waterway: up to 2000 larger vessels sailing at any given time



Multitude of pressures affecting the Baltic



About HELCOM



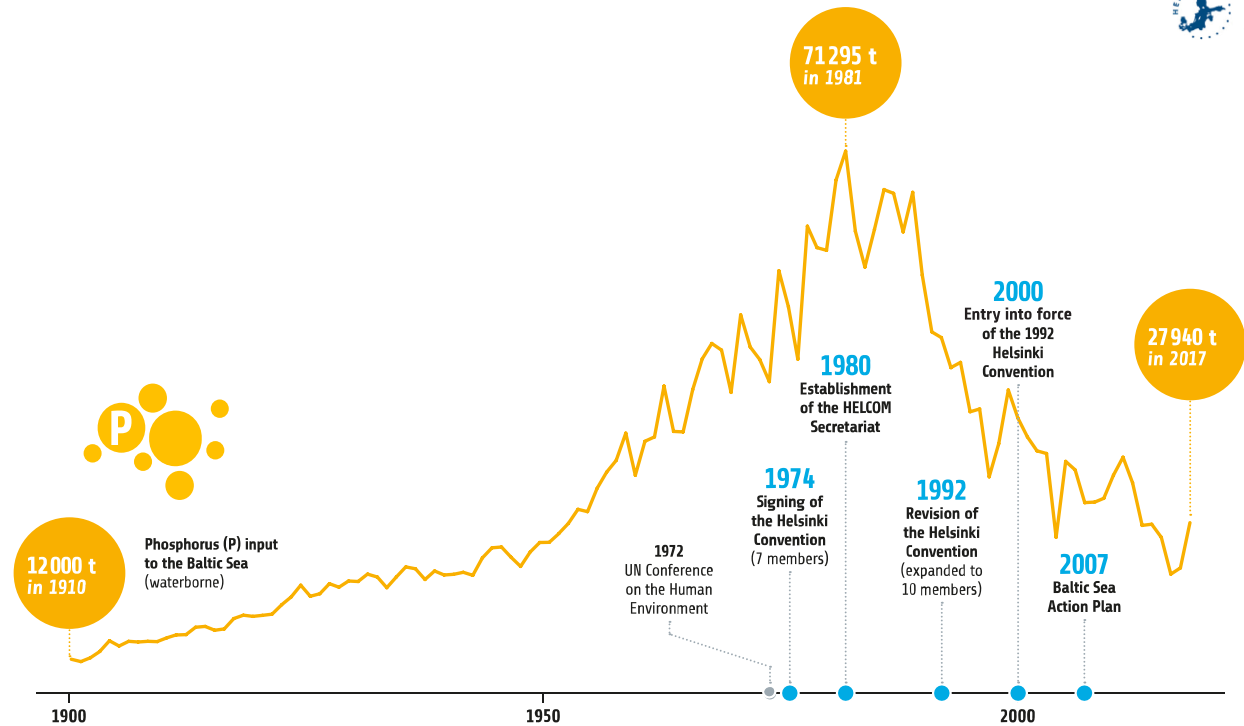
1974: The Helsinki Convention, signed by the then seven Contracting Parties



1980: Establishment of the HELCOM Secretariat



1992: Ten Contracting Parties
EE, EU, DK, DE, FI, LV, LT, PL, SE, RU



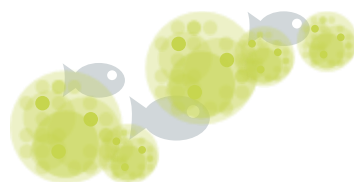
▲ Signing of the Helsinki Convention in 1974

Progress yes, but...



The Baltic Sea is not in a good state:

Good Environmental Status (GES) and the environmental goals set by HELCOM are unlikely to be fully reached by 2021 as previously decided.



Eutrophication:

Still the major pressure despite considerable improvements and clear trends of nutrient reduction since the 1980s



Emerging and previously unaddressed challenges:

- Marine litter, plastic pollution and ghost nets
- POPs: “Forever chemicals”
- Pharmaceuticals
- Underwater noise
- Seabed disturbance
- Climate change



Reasons for delay:

- Ecosystem lag
- New challenges
- Some measures haven’t been implemented yet
- Some measures might not be sufficient



Top pressures on the Baltic Sea



Nutrients and eutrophication



Hazardous substances (including marine litter)



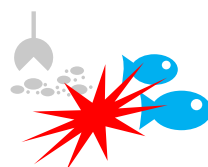
Non-indigenous species



Extraction of fish (overfishing)



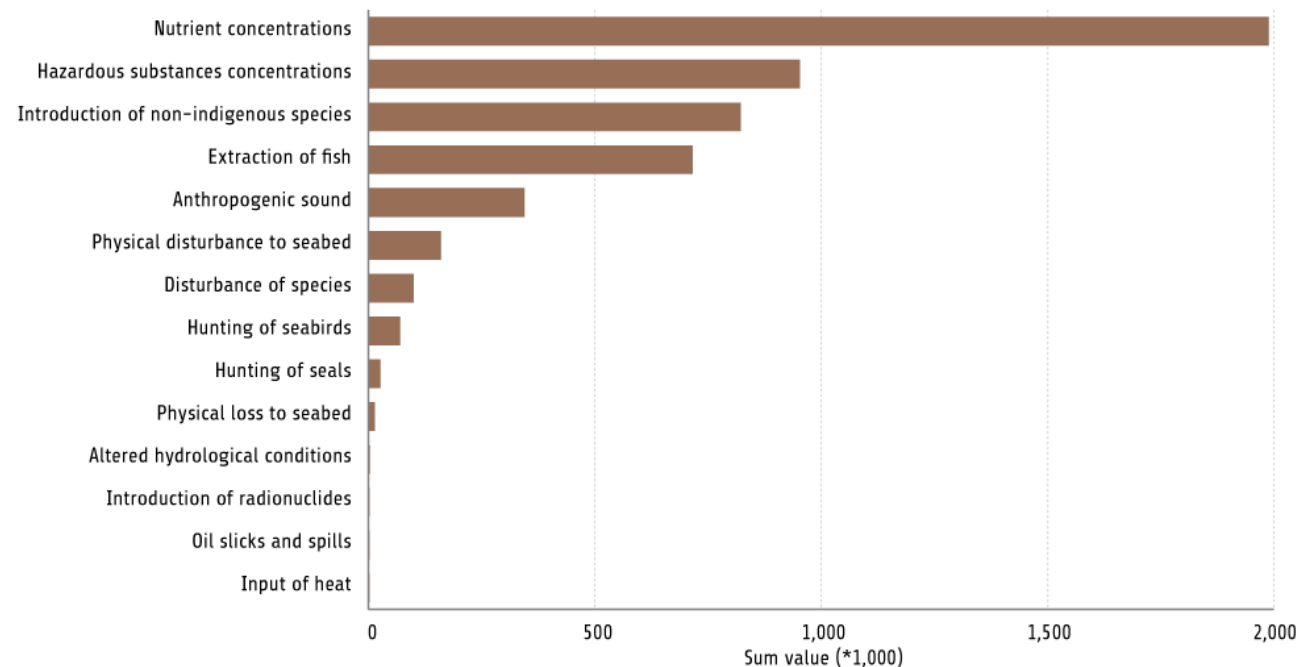
Underwater noise



Disturbance of species, to seabed



Pressure themes ranked by cumulative impact at regional scale



Nitrogen and phosphorous inputs, the root cause of eutrophication

97% of the Baltic Sea is affected by eutrophication, causing excessive growth of algae and upsetting biodiversity.

Source: HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report

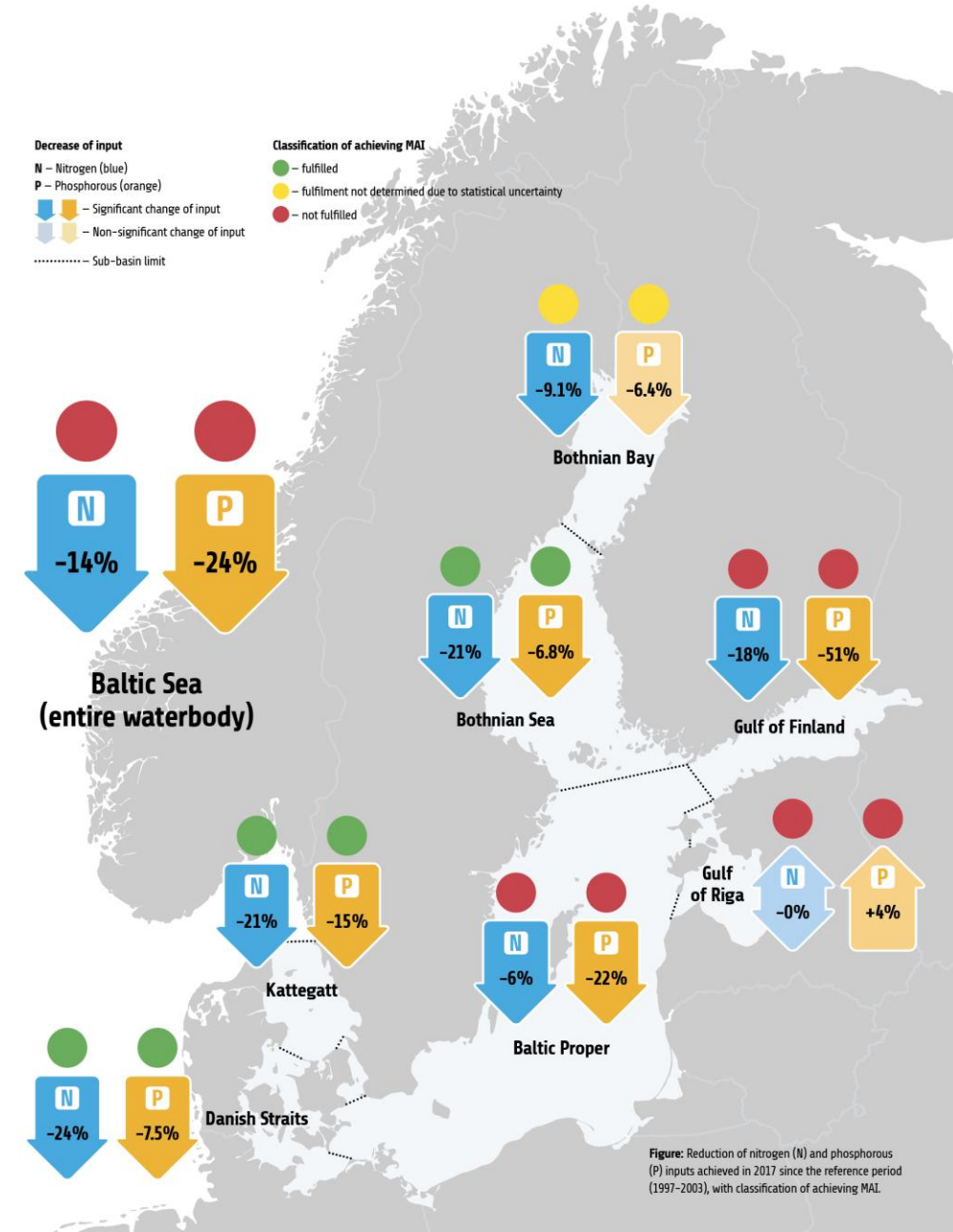
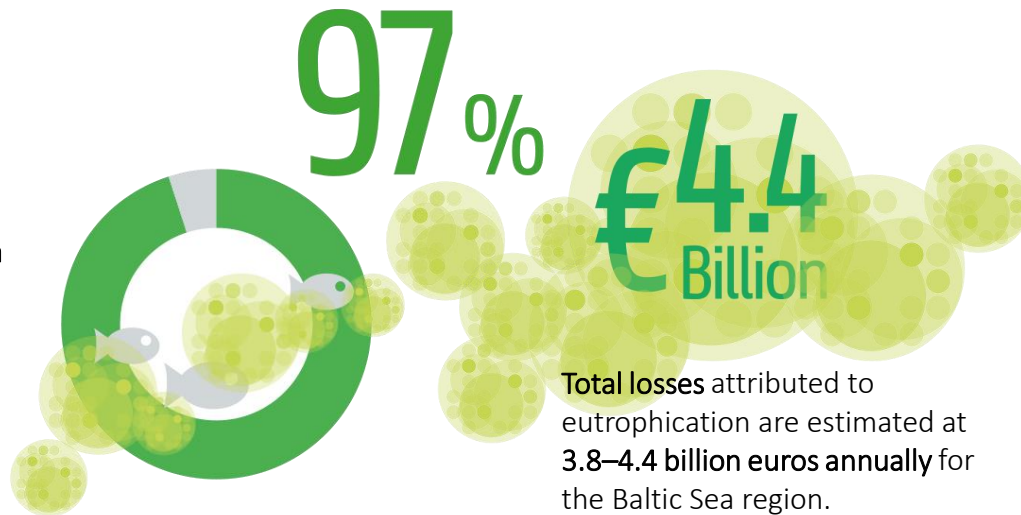
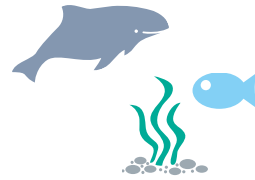


Figure: Reduction of nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) inputs achieved in 2017 since the reference period (1997–2003), with classification of achieving MAI.

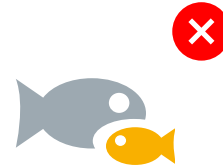
Biodiversity



All habitats are affected by pressures from human activities



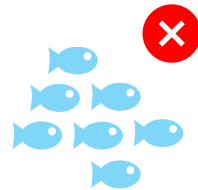
Impact on all species:
Far-reaching and Baltic-wide



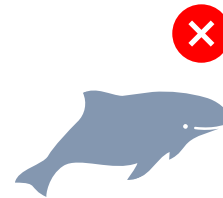
Food web:
Changes in the Baltic Sea ecosystem and food web



Water birds:
Achieve the threshold value

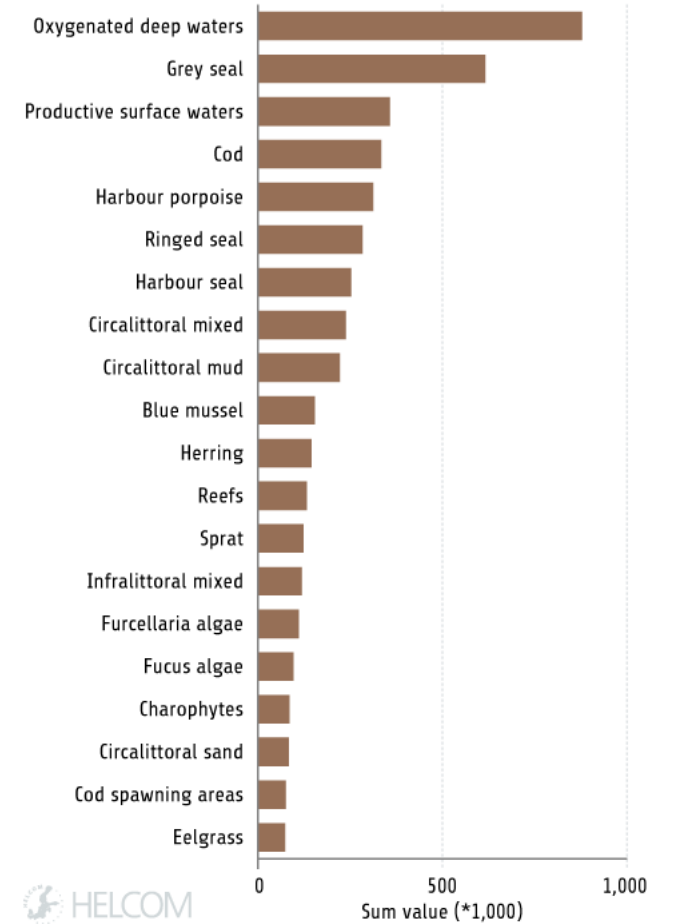


Fish:
Overall, not in a favourable status



Marine mammals:
Overall, not in a favourable status

Most widely impacted species and habitats at regional scale



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



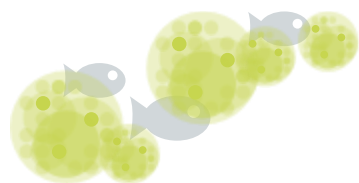
Ministerial Meetings

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



Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

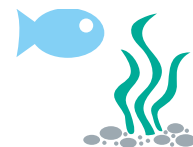
To restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021



*Baltic Sea
unaffected by
eutrophication*



*Baltic Sea
undisturbed by
**hazardous
substances***



*Favourable status
of Baltic Sea
biodiversity*



*Environmentally
friendly **maritime
activities***



Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

HELCOM's programme of actions for a healthier Baltic Sea



Science-based actions:

BSAP is based on long-term vision and actions, underpinned by solid science



Regional and cross-sectoral acceptance:

The BSAP is widely accepted across the Baltic Sea region



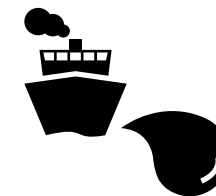
Nutrients and hazardous substances:

Reduction of inputs due to BSAP actions



Protection of biodiversity:

Improvements can be linked to the BSAP, such as for seals



Cleaner and safer shipping:

Less maritime accidents and spills, cleaner shipping practices



2021: Update of the BSAP



Based on a strong political mandate:
Update decided by Ministerial Meeting 2018



Evolution, not revolution:
Based on current plan, same ambition level, existing commitments



Ecosystem approach:
Economic and social benefits of a healthy sea will be considered



Managing human activities:
MM2018: “Include actions necessary for managing human activities [to meet the HELCOM goals]”



Adapting the plan to the current HELCOM topics:
Marine litter, underwater noise, seabed loss, biodiversity conservation, climate change...



Global targets and commitments:
SDGs, Aichi targets, EU MSFD considered in the update



Related processes



Nutrients:

Nutrient recycling and internal nutrient reserves. *Tool: Nutrient Recycling Strategy*



Marine litter: Significant reduction by 2025.

Tool: Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter



Land-sea interaction:

Working with river basin management authorities. *Tool: Workshop with RBMAs*



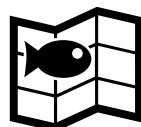
Underwater noise:

Addressing effects of noise on marine animal species. *Tool: Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise*



Climate change:

Understanding its effects for informed policies. *Tool: Climate Change Factsheet*



Maritime spatial planning:

applying ecosystem-based management. *Tool: Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap*



HELCOM Science Agenda:

Future science needs for a healthy Baltic Sea



HOLAS III (2016-2021)

PLC-8 (1995-2021)
Holistic assessment of state and loads on the Baltic Sea

