



Recent HELCOM activities

Markus Helavuori, Deputy Executive Secretary

Sixth Meeting of the Mediterranean Network of Law Enforcement Officials relating to MARPOL within the framework of the Barcelona Convention (MENELAS), 4-5 December 2024



The Baltic Sea



Unique but young and fragile ecosystem



Catchment area:
4x area of the sea



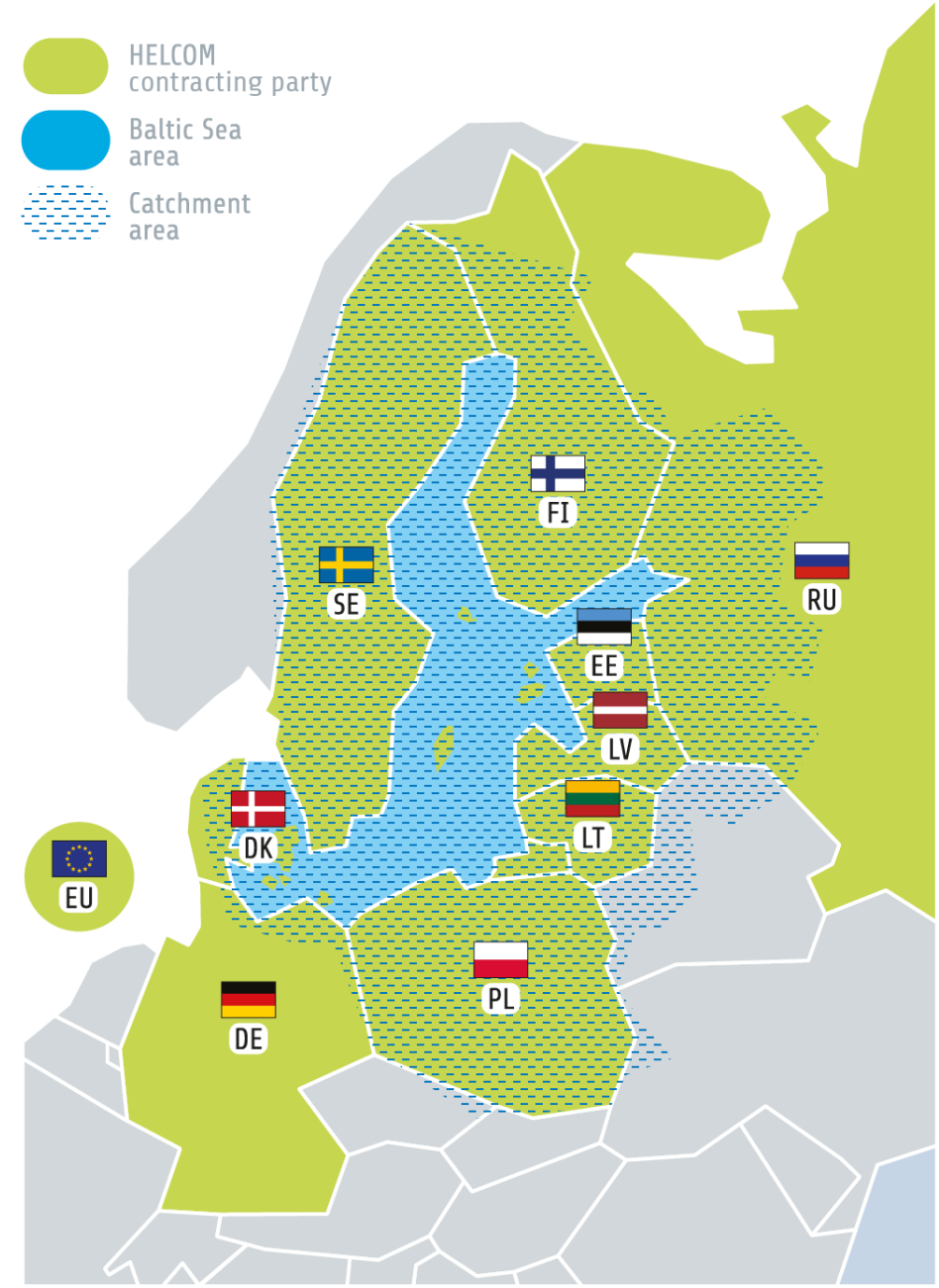
Population (catchment):
85 million



Busy waterway: on average ~1500 ships a day



Multitude of pressures affecting the Baltic



About HELCOM



1974: The Helsinki Convention signed by 7 Contracting Parties



1980: HELCOM Secretariat established



1992: 10 Contracting Parties
EE, EU, DK, DE, FI, LV, LT, PL, SE, RU



2024: HELCOM celebrates 50th anniversary



▲ Signing of the Helsinki Convention in 1974

HELCOM structure

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)



DK EE EU FI DE
LV LT PL RU SE

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.

2024 Riga Ministerial Meeting

- The focus of the Ministerial Meeting was on the results of the third holistic assessment (HOLAS 3) of the Baltic Sea, and how these can be used to strengthen implementation to reach the objectives and goals of Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP).
- The Meeting reflected on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the original Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area.
- The outcome of the meeting was **Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 Ministerial Meeting on the Baltic Sea Marine Environment**



Riga, Latvia • 25 April 2024
Ministerial Meeting
on the Baltic Sea Marine Environment



Current Chairmanship: Lithuania

Lithuania: 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026

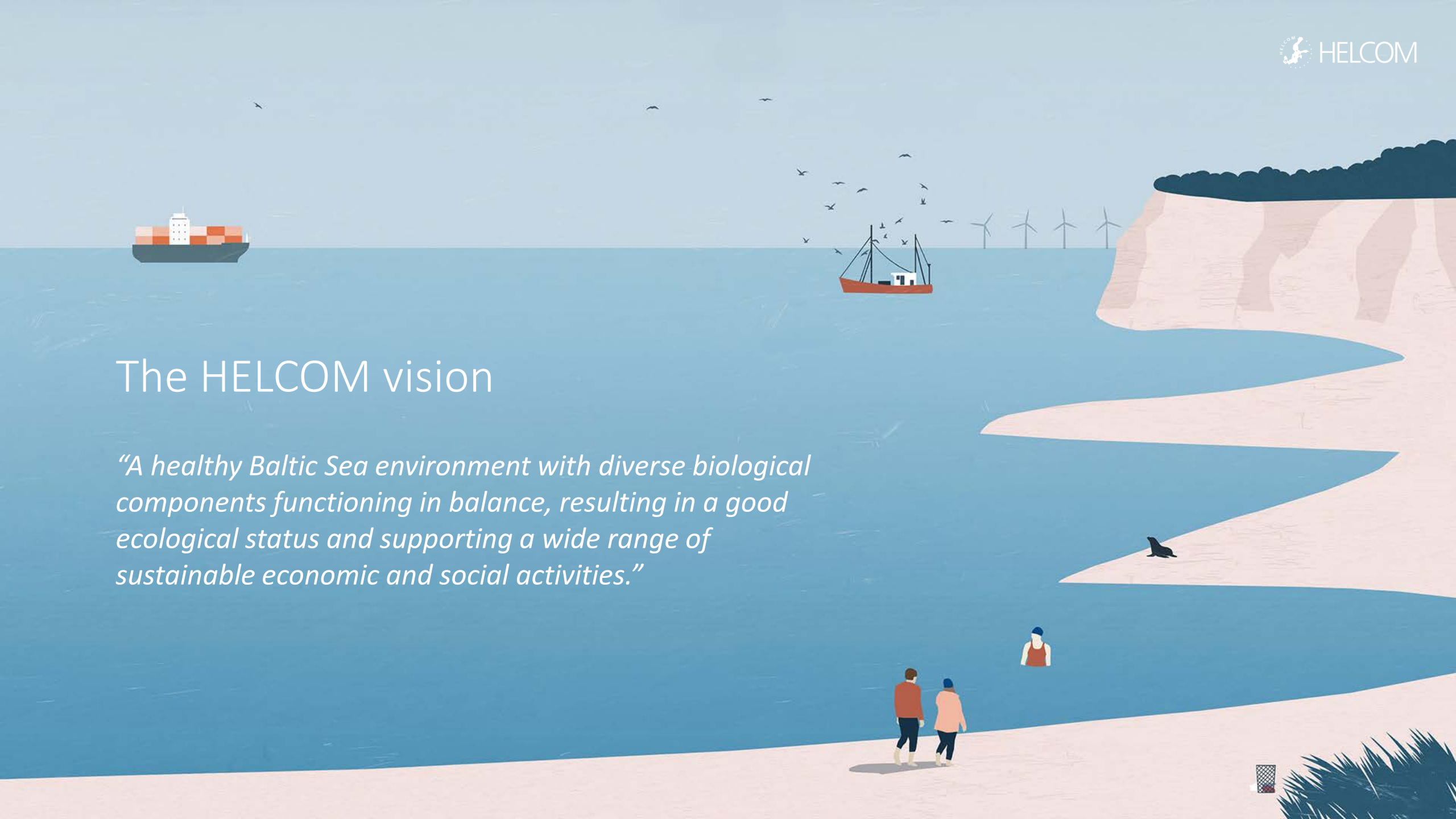
Priorities:

- (1) Strengthening HELCOM's role in the context of geopolitical challenges;
- (2) Seeking a balance between the Blue Economy and environmental protection;
- (3) Seeking dialogue with the public by involving them in decision-making

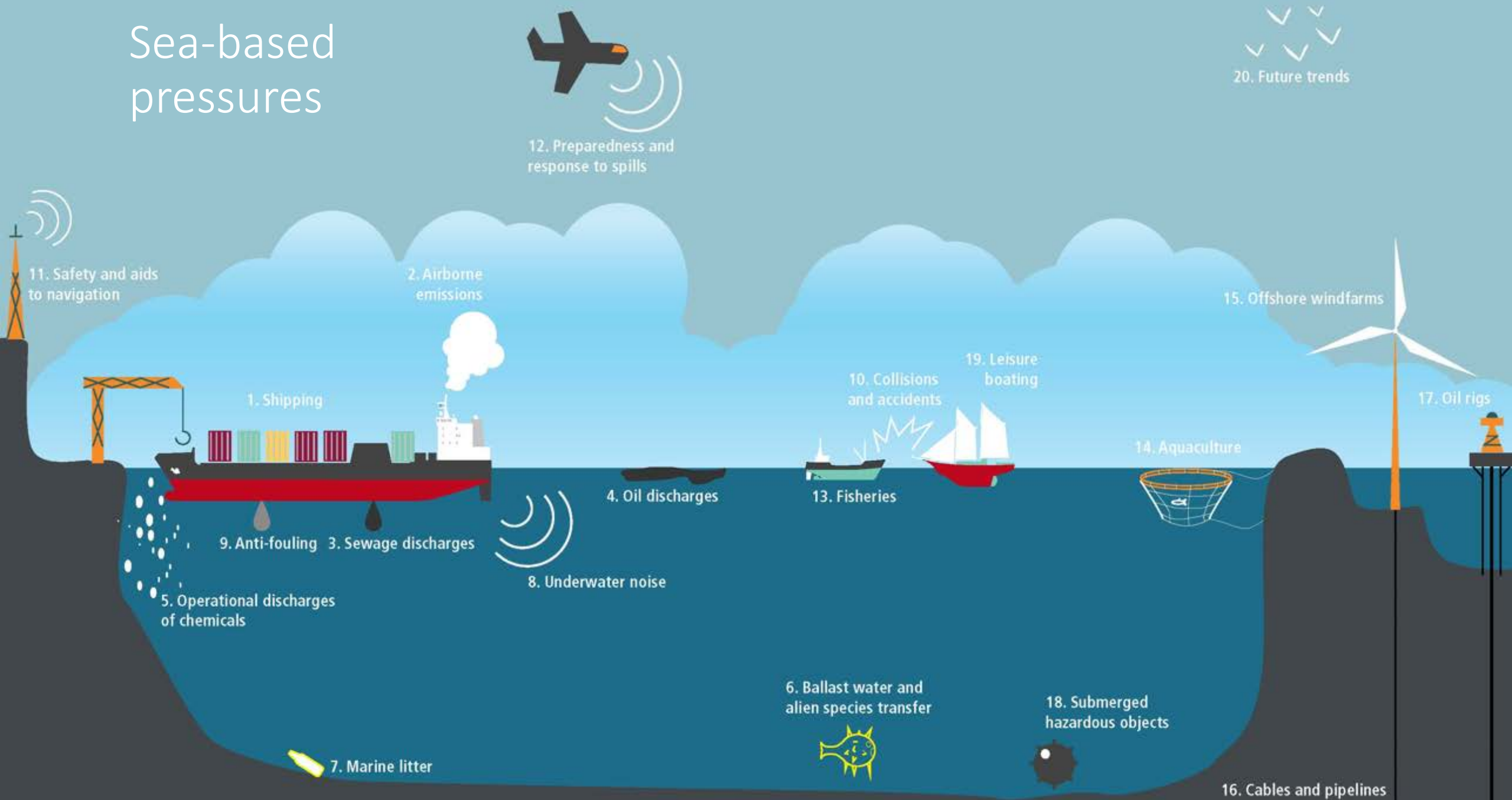


The HELCOM vision

“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.”



Sea-based pressures





Sea-based activities



Sea-based activities goal

“Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities”



Ecological objectives

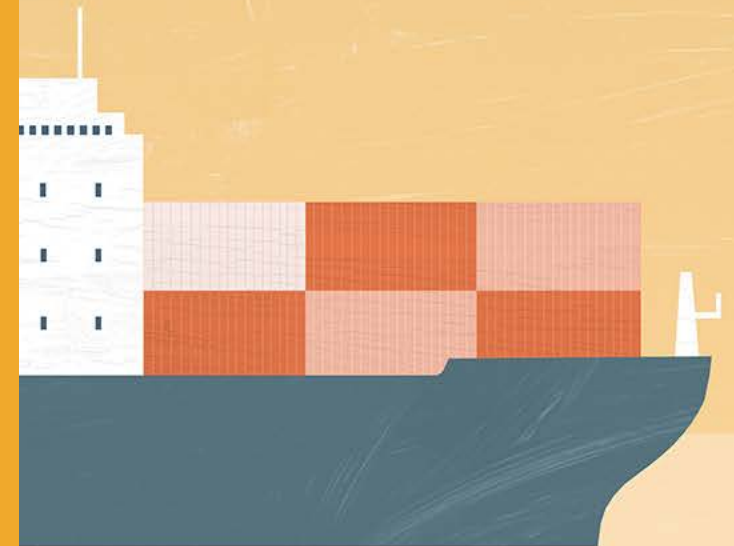
- No or minimal disturbance to biodiversity and the ecosystem
- Activities affecting seabed habitats do not threaten the viability of species' populations and communities
- No or minimal harm to marine life from man-made noise



Management objectives

- Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats
- Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect marine life
- No introductions of non-indigenous species
- Minimize the input of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter from sea-based activities
- Enforce international regulations – no illegal discharges
- Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution
- Effective emergency and response capabilities
- Minimize harmful air emissions
- Zero discharges from offshore platforms
- Ensure sustainable use of the marine resources

- ✓ *Enforce international regulations – no illegal discharges*
- ✓ *Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution*
- ✓ *Effective emergency and response capabilities*



HELCOM and shipping

Due to its international nature, shipping is primarily regulated through the IMO

- HELCOM plays an important role in harmonizing implementation of IMO regulations and guidelines in the Baltic Sea region.
- HELCOM is proactive in amending IMO regulations through joint proposals negotiated within HELCOM (e.g. MARPOL Annex IV Baltic Sea special area for sewage).
- Longstanding cooperation on responding to spills.



Recent MARPOL related progress

- Roadmap to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the Baltic Sea NOx Emission Control Area (NECA) adopted in December 2023.
- Roadmap to reduce the input of pollutants from Exhaust Gas Cleaning System discharge waters under development.
- Enforcement of MARPOL Annex IV special area and ensure adequate PRF.
- Studying impacts of discharges related to MARPOL Annex II, IV and V with a view to eventually developing appropriate regulatory proposals to minimize the impacts on the marine environment
- Enhancing the use of alternative fuels and sources of energy in shipping and recreational boating





HELCOM Shipping Data Platform

The HELCOM Shipping data platform provides access to various shipping-related data collected by HELCOM within the [Maritime](#) and [Response](#) Working Groups, experts groups and related projects.

All HELCOM data resources are available via the [HELCOM Map and data service](#).

MAPS

These maps provide dynamic visualizations to enhance the understanding of shipping spatial data.



Traffic intensity



Accidents



Oil spills



Emissions



Continuous
underwater
noise

DASHBOARDS

Dashboards offer interactive visualizations that provide deeper insights into complex data hosted by HELCOM.



Oil spills



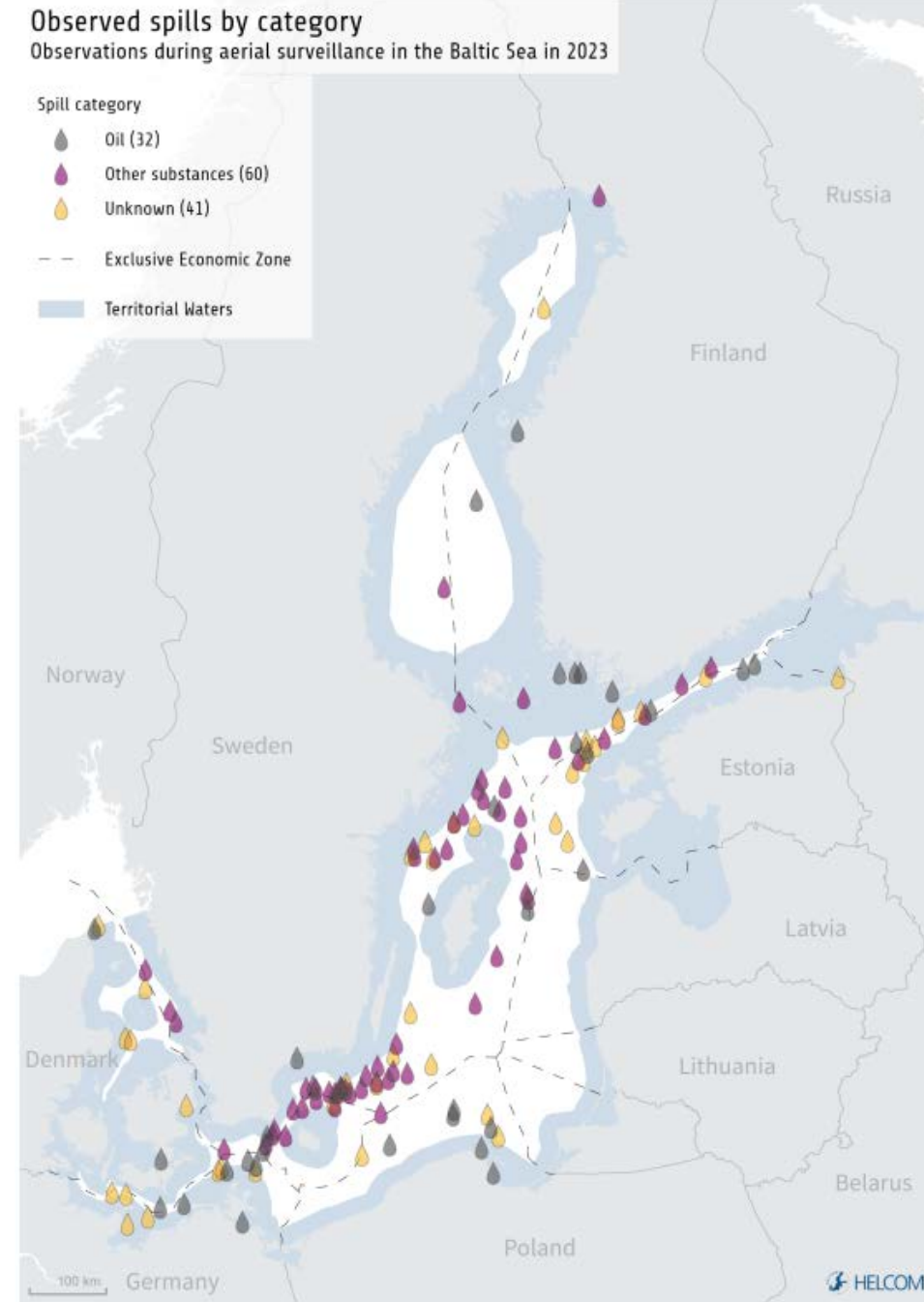
Shipping accidents



Port reception facilities

Surveillance, detection and monitoring operations - Annual reports

- [2023 Aerial Surveillance report](#) published in August 2024
- The number of observed spills has steadily declined over the years
- 24% of detected spills were confirmed as mineral oil
- 76% were identified as other substances (e.g. other noxious liquid substances, fish oil, vegetable oil or greywater), garbage, litter, floating objects or unknown observations
- Most spills are very small (<1m³)
- Responding to spills of novel fuel types and products is a challenge



Follow us



[linkedin.com
/company/
helcominfo](https://www.linkedin.com/company/helcominfo)



[instagram.com
/helcominfo](https://www.instagram.com/helcominfo)



[x.com/
HELCOMInfo](https://x.com/HELCOMInfo)



[facebook.com/
helcominfo](https://www.facebook.com/helcominfo)



[youtube.com/
@HELCOM](https://www.youtube.com/@HELCOM)

<https://helcom.fi>

