

# Helcom Kick-starts Work on Underwater Noise



“Suppressing harmful underwater noise in the Baltic Sea topped the agenda of the HELCOM Pressure Group which met last week, as the practical work for creating a regional register of impulsive sounds was kick-started. A manner of national reporting of the occurrence of such abrupt sounds, which are challenging to measure, has been jointly agreed. The Impulsive Sound Register will contribute to the overall task of minimising the negative impact of underwater noise on marine life.

Representatives of scientific and policy institutions from the Baltic littoral states took part in the 3-day Pressure Group meeting, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, to review and assess the impact of pressures mainly from input of hazardous substances and nutrients, littering of marine environment and dredging activities. The meeting was chaired by Lars Sonesten

from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

The meeting followed up on the commitment to set up the Impulsive Sound Register by the end of 2016, along with other noise management measures, as agreed by the HELCOM 2013 Ministerial Meeting. The new HELCOM Experts Network on Underwater Noise is about to start hands-on activities, the topmost goal being a Roadmap to building a knowledge base on underwater noise. The Network will prepare the short term Roadmap for 2015–17 and look after its implementation. Moreover, the Meeting will review the ongoing work to prepare a region-wide HELCOM indicator for ambient noise, referring to continuous low frequency anthropogenic sound.

As the biotopes of the Baltic seafloor are negatively affected by several human activities such as dredging, construction, fishing with bottom contact fishing gear and extraction of sand and gravel, the Meeting will inspect the latest concerned information submitted by the countries. An updated report on disposal of dredged material at sea for 1999–2013 has been submitted for the Meeting, which is invited to identify any hindrances for reporting comprehensive and reliable information in due time.