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HARSAT - A new Assessment Tool

The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme ([AMAP](#)), the Helsinki Commission ([HELCOM](#)) and the OSPAR Commission ([OSPAR](#)) are responsible for monitoring and assessing the state of the marine environment in adjoining, and partly overlapping, sea areas of the Arctic Ocean, Baltic Sea, and North-East Atlantic, respectively.

All three organisations have expert groups responsible for conducting assessments of monitoring data; many of the involved experts participate in the work of more than one organisation. The resulting assessments provide the basis for policy-relevant products that support sound, science-based decision making.

The three organisations have a long history of collaboration to streamline work on monitoring in the marine environment, not least in regard to harmonising methods and protocols for monitoring and data analysis, and promoting common data management systems including using a common (thematic) data centre at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea ([ICES](#)). Among other things, this harmonisation of technical work ensures consistency in the information that is presented through the organisations respective policy communication channels.

In 2023 a new collaborative effort was implemented by AMAP, HELCOM and OSPAR, supported by ICES, as well as consultants and members of the relevant expert groups, to upgrade the existing tools used for statistical analysis of data on contaminants in marine media. The result of this work is now available in a new *Harmonised Regional Seas Assessment Tool* (HARSAT), an Open-Source R-based statistical package that is publicly available on [GitHub](#). A 'user-community' is being established to provide feedback that can be used to inform the future application, development, and maintenance of the HARSAT tool – with further potential for organisational cooperation in this necessary follow-up work.

The development of HARSAT is an example of the long-standing collaboration between AMAP, HELCOM and OSPAR that facilitates applying resources available within the three organisations in a cost-effective and efficient manner, benefiting all parties.

The HARSAT work was financially supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the NEFCO¹ Baltic Sea Action Plan co-financed PreEMPT² project and supported by a close working cooperation with the Baltic Data Flows Project co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union, and through a standing working process with ICES.

For further information contact the [[AMAP](#) | [HELCOM](#) | [OSPAR](#)] Secretariat.

ENDS

¹ Nordic Environment Finance Corporation

² Pre-empting pollution by screening for possible risks

Note for editors

1. Established in 1991, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) is one of six Working Groups of the Arctic Council. AMAP is mandated: To monitor and assess the status of the Arctic region with respect to pollution and climate change issues; To document levels and trends, pathways and processes, and effects on ecosystems and humans, and propose actions to reduce associated threats for consideration by governments; To produce sound science-based, policy-relevant assessments and public outreach products to inform policy and decision-making processes.
2. The Helsinki Convention, first signed in 1974, seeks to protect the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution from land, air and sea. It also commits the signatories to take measures on conserving habitats and biological diversity and for the sustainable use of marine resources. The Convention covers the whole of the Baltic Sea area, including inland waters as well as the water of the sea itself and the seabed.
3. The OSPAR Commission was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. The OSPAR Convention is made up of five Annexes which deal with the prevention and elimination of pollution from land-based sources; dumping or incineration; and pollution from offshore sources; as well as the assessment of the quality of the marine environment; and the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area.