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Note that this document was submitted after the established deadline. It will be decided by the Session whether the document can be discussed or is postponed to the next meeting and/or session or handled via correspondence.

Background

PERMAGOV (2023-2026) is an EU funded project aiming at improving the implementation and performance of EU marine policies to reach the goals set in the European Green Deal by identifying and overcoming critical institutional barriers to effective policy implementation. PERMAGOV relies heavily on the co-development of governance solutions between the project and case study stakeholders. As a stakeholder group in one or both HELCOM case studies (seabed integrity, marine litter), the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group is likely to be invited to play an active role in the project and its outputs. In light of this, PERMAGOV is eager to begin a dialog with relevant HELCOM groups to ensure the success of the PERMAGOV project and usefulness of project outputs to case study stakeholders.

More information can be found in this document.

Action requested

The SG is invited to:

- take note of the project overview,
- discuss the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group's future interest and role in the project.

PERMAGOV project overview

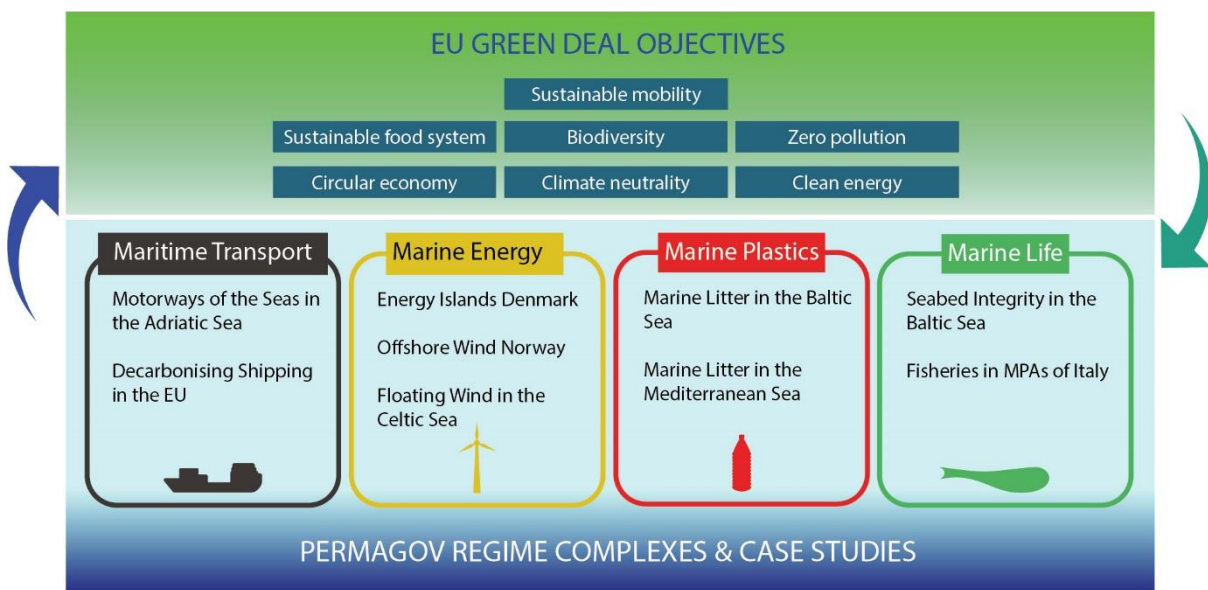
Climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and pollution demand new governance strategies, but implementing transformative policy changes can be challenging due to institutional barriers such as fragmented responsibilities across actors, missing formal commitments of institutions, lack of collaboration or uneven access to information.

These barriers must be understood and addressed to enable new solutions for achieving the European Green Deal. Overcoming barriers can foster collective action across sectors and governance actors and boost effective policy implementation through jointly developed policy and collaborative initiatives. In addition, e-governance innovations are proliferating and are expected to foster transformative change by enhancing transparency and communication.

Project concept

PERMAGOV aims to improve the implementation and performance of EU marine policies to reach the goals set out in the EU Green Deal by identifying critical institutional barriers to effective policy implementation and proposing new and advanced governance approaches. PERMAGOV will pilot a novel multi-level, collaborative governance approach for selected regional seas and national waters around Europe, targeting four marine regime complexes of key importance to sustainable development: maritime transport, marine energy, marine plastics, marine life.

A diagnostic tool and a framework for assessing the governance performance will be developed in PERMAGOV to identify how institutional barriers affect governance performance in the four regime complexes and associated cases.



Co-creation

PERMAGOV will co-develop research results, working closely with stakeholders, including in nine case studies, to explore collaborative and digital governance tools for overcoming identified institutional challenges in a real-world setting.

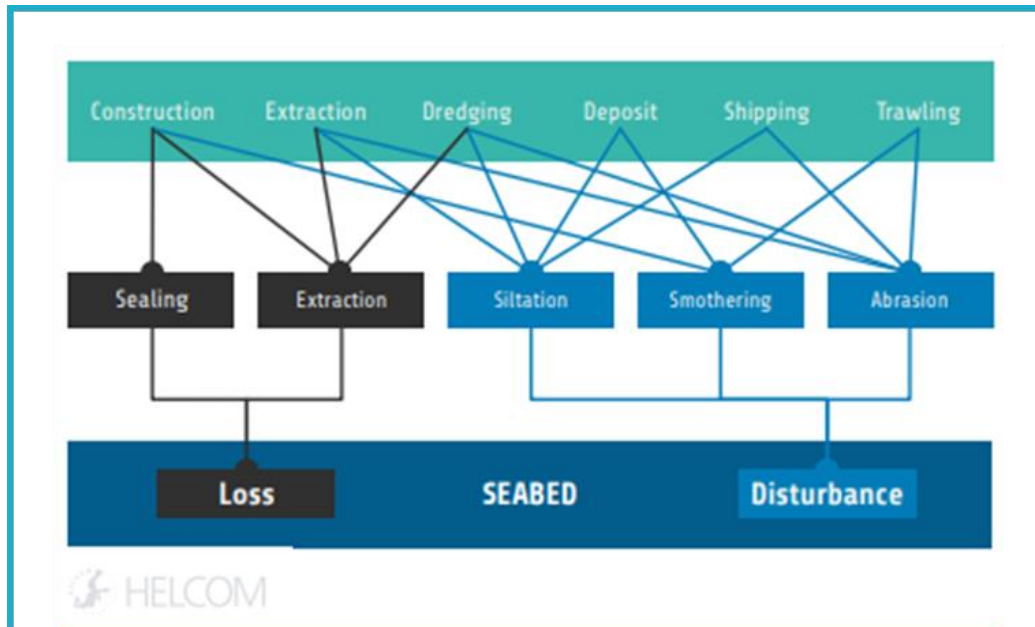
Through co-development of research results, PERMAGOV will be able to enhance the capabilities of marine stakeholders to navigate and overcome institutional barriers and improve their contribution to the implementation of EU Green Deal policies and agreed regional sea policies. Stakeholders will be actively involved in joint knowledge production, co-creating the performance assessment framework, and assessing policy and governance options to overcome identified challenges and institutional barriers. More specifically,

stakeholders will be asked to provide their perspectives and share experiences with implementing EU and regional sea policies to collect information, build a shared understanding within project, and ensure results are tested against real-world experiences.

Finally, stakeholders will provide insight into collaborative e-governance tools and approaches to improve governance for the implementation of the vision set out in the Green Deal. These targeted results will allow for the identification of lessons for improving marine governance more broadly at the national, sea-basin, and EU levels. HELCOM is involved in two of the project's case studies.

Case studies

Seabed integrity



This case study investigates practices and related challenges to implementing regional sea commitments to protect benthic habitats from loss and disturbance. Loss and disturbance of the seabed is caused by multiple human activities, but PERMAGOV will focus on dredging and bottom trawling due to their high impact and/or large geographic extent.

The selection of the two topics also allows us to study different constellations of multi-layered governance. Fishing governance is largely EU-centred, while governance of dredging is centred more on the national level. Even though the centre of governance may be different, both cases have governance structures and related processes on multiple levels of governance, including the HELCOM level. An interesting recent development for the case study is the publication of the MSFD's threshold values for seabed integrity and further specification that can be expected in coming years. The MSFD threshold values may have implications on both cases.

The case will be conducted by the Finnish Environment Institute (Syke) and the HELCOM Secretariat.

Riku Varjopuro: riku.varjopuro@syke.fi

Luke Dodd: luke.dodd@helcom.fi

Marine litter

This case study focuses on cross-sectoral and multi-level governance approaches that aim to tackle marine litter in the Baltic Sea. Sea-based sources of pollution are prioritised, particularly abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), and lost cargo.

It is still under consideration whether other issues may be addressed in this case study for comparison with a case study on marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea. The interplay between different sectoral governance regimes will be investigated, and lessons for overcoming institutional barriers that are essential for

governance in combatting marine litter identified, including under the European Green Deal and the future global plastics agreement supported by the UN Environment Assembly.

The results from the case study will contribute directly to the ongoing work of the Sea-based Pressures Working Group and Marine Litter Expert Groups, and in particular to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (actions HL31 and HL32) and the revised 2021 HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (actions RS6-RS15).

The case study is coordinated by the Research Institute for Sustainability – Helmholtz Centre Potsdam (RIFS) and the HELCOM Secretariat.

Ben Boteler: Ben.Boteler@rifs-potsdam.de

Luke Dodd: luke.dodd@helcom.fi

Involvement of HELCOM WGs and EGs

We hope to work together with the wide range of relevant HELCOM groups throughout the project implementation (2023-2026) to get feedback and advice on the study implementation. In the first phase of the study, we are mapping relevant policy documents and regulations, decision-making and actors. In the later stages of the project PERMAGOV will analyse institutional barriers that may hamper regional sea actions to ensure seabed integrity. This is followed by assessment of performance of current governance arrangements, which will lead to last part of the project that develops improved governance solutions (see case study schedule below). During the project we will conduct interviews of key experts from HELCOM WGs and EGs, ask comments for documents and organize workshops where HELCOM experts can be invited.

Case study schedule (2023-2026)

Task	Dates	WG & EG involvement
Case study coordination	Jan 2023 – Dec 2026	Kept informed
Multi-layered ocean governance arrangements to support the European Green Deal	Aug 2023 – Mar 2024	Interviews of key persons (from WGs and EGs) Commented in a stakeholder workshop in February 2024 (invitees from WGs and EGs tbc)
Identifying e-governance approaches and their potential to support progress towards the European Green Deal	Aug 2023 – Apr 2024	Interviews of key persons
Developed of diagnostic tool	Aug 2023 – Apr 2024	Commented in a stakeholder workshop in February (invitees from WGs and EGs tbc)
Identifying institutional barriers	Nov 2023 – Jun 2024	Interviews of key persons Document/presentation for commenting
Validation and refinement of the PERMAGOV collaborative governance model	Apr 2024 – Dec 2024	Interviews of key persons Workshop with WG and EG experts
Assessment of governance performance in cases	Aug 2024 – Apr 2025	Interviews of key persons Workshop with WG and EG experts
Synthesis of performance assessment	Apr 2025 – Dec 2025	Document/presentation for commenting Workshop with WG and EG experts (ca. Oct 2025)
Joint problem definition for improved policy solutions	Nov 2024 – Jun 2025	Document/presentation for commenting

		Workshop with WG and EG experts
Co-designing marine governance solutions and pathways for cases (including e-governance solutions)	Apr 2025 – Aug 2026	Documents/presentations for commenting Workshops with WG and EG experts
Upscaling governance solutions and pathways (including e-governance solutions)	Mar 2026 – Oct 2026	Documents/presentations for commenting Workshops with WG and EG experts

Project fact sheet

Project fact sheet	
Name	PERMAGOV: Improving Performance of EU Marine Governance
Duration	January 2023 - December 2026
Partners	Wageningen University & Research, Aalborg University, Queen's University Belfast, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Research Institute for Sustainability – Helmholtz-Zentrum Potsdam, Finnish Environment Institute, 21C Consultancy, Plan Bleu, LifeWatch ERIC, Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, European Shippers' Council, Celtic Sea Power, World Wide Fund for Nature Italia, The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, Arctic Energy Partners
Website	www.permagov.eu
Twitter	@Permagov_EU
LinkedIn	PERMAGOV Project
Coordinator	Judith.vanLeeuwen@wur.nl