



# **GUIDELINES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS IN PUBLICATIONS**

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## Contents

Guidelines for acknowledgements in publications .....	2
1. Executive lead .....	2
2. Editorship .....	2
3. Authorship.....	2
4. Acknowledgements .....	3
5. HELCOM-specific publications vs scientific articles.....	4
6. Consistency across deliverables .....	4
7. Example wording for acknowledgements.....	5

## Guidelines for acknowledgements in publications

These guidelines provide a consistent approach for determining authorship and acknowledgements in publications arising from the PROTECT BALTIC project. They balance standard academic practice with HELCOM procedures, ensuring transparency, fairness, and recognition of contributions, while accounting for the highly participatory approach used in HELCOM work and maintaining the political mandate associated with HELCOM outputs.

### 1. Executive lead

The Executive lead category acknowledges individuals—such as project managers, coordinators, or other executive-level contributors—whose strategic or organizational role was essential for enabling the work.

This recognition applies when the person played a key role in facilitating, steering, or safeguarding the process, even if they did not directly contribute to the analysis or writing.

Executive leads are not considered authors unless they also meet the authorship criteria (outlined in section 3), but may be listed prominently (e.g., on the title page or in a separate contribution statement) to reflect their central enabling role.

### 2. Editorship

Some products may require editorial oversight rather than classical authorship—particularly when outputs compile contributions from many experts. Editors are individuals who have provided substantial input into shaping, reviewing, harmonizing, and ensuring the quality of the publication, without necessarily contributing original analysis or text.

Editors may be listed separately from authors (e.g., as *Edited by...*) to reflect this coordinating and quality-assurance role. If editors also meet the authorship criteria, they may be included as authors instead.

### 3. Authorship

Authorship should be limited to individuals who have made a substantial intellectual and sustained contribution to the work. This ensures that those listed as authors can take responsibility for the content of the publication and have genuinely shaped its development.

- **Lead author(s):**

The person (or people) who led the work—whether through analysis, writing, or overall coordination of tasks—should be listed first. This reflects their central role in shaping the study.

- **Other authors:**  
Remaining authors are by default listed in **alphabetical order**. This is the default because PROTECT BALTIC and HELCOM products often involve large teams, and alphabetical order avoids disputes over ranking. However, if everyone in the author team agrees, another order may be adopted (for example, by level of contribution).
- **Criteria for authorship:**  
To qualify as an author, a person should meet all the following:
  - Contributed intellectually to the conception, design, analysis, or drafting of the work.
  - Been involved over a meaningful period (typically months or years, not just a single meeting or a few hours).
  - Accepted responsibility for their contribution to the work.
- **Large author groups:**  
In some cases, projects involve dozens of contributors. If the list grows beyond a manageable size (e.g. >20 authors), a **group authorship model** can be used—for example, “PROTECT BALTIC Author Team/PROTECT BALTIC Work Package X”—with the full list of names provided in an annex or supplement. This approach keeps publications readable while still ensuring recognition.

#### 4. Acknowledgements

Not all contributions warrant authorship, but it is equally important to acknowledge the valuable input of those who have supported the work in other ways.

- **Contributors not meeting authorship criteria** (e.g. because their input was limited in scope or duration) should be recognized in the acknowledgements section. This typically includes:
  - Workshop participants.
  - Experts who provided data, feedback, or technical input during meetings.
  - Individuals whose contribution was limited to a small or specific task.
- **Placement of acknowledgements:**  
Depending on journal requirements and the length of the list, acknowledgements may appear either on the first page (front insert) or at the end of the article.
- **Institutional acknowledgements:**  
Institutions such as the HELCOM Secretariat, partner research institutes, and EU funding bodies (e.g. the Horizon Europe programme) should also be acknowledged, as they provide support, infrastructure, or mandate for the work.

## 5. HELCOM-specific publications vs scientific articles

Since HELCOM outputs differ in nature from academic publications, the rules for authorship and acknowledgement also differ slightly.

- **HELCOM publications (e.g. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings):**
  - HELCOM is always listed as the main author when the publication is referenced. This reflects that the content represents the consensus view of the HELCOM contracting parties, not individual scientists.
  - Contributing authors are listed within the publication, according to the rules above.
  - Such outputs carry political mandate, as they have gone through consultation and approval by countries.
- **Scientific journal articles (peer-reviewed):**
  - Here, standard academic authorship conventions apply. Individual scientists may be listed as authors.
  - More flexibility is allowed in the order of authorship.
  - It is important to acknowledge the HELCOM framework and political mandate in the acknowledgements or methods section, since the work arises from a cooperative intergovernmental process.
  - If an authors affiliation with HELCOM is noted in the paper, please include the following disclaimer “Views presented here are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of the Helsinki Commission or the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention.”

## 6. Consistency across deliverables

Given that the project produces **HELCOM outputs**, **EU deliverables**, and **scientific publications**, consistency is essential. Differences in authorship and acknowledgements can lead to confusion or perceived unfairness if not carefully managed.

- The same principles should be applied across all deliverables, even if the format differs. Unless there are extenuating circumstances acknowledgement approaches should follow be prioritised as follows: HELCOM>EU>academic authorship.
- Writing teams should discuss and agree on authorship and acknowledgements early in the drafting process, so expectations are clear from the start.
- The **project coordination team** has final responsibility for ensuring that practices align with HELCOM procedures and with the project’s agreed approach.

## 7. Example wording for acknowledgements

The following text provides a model that can be adapted for specific publications:

*“We thank the XXX contributors to the [Title of paper/publication/deliverable/product], who participated in workshops, provided data, or contributed to this publication through HELCOM meetings. Their input has been essential to the development of this work. The study was carried out within the framework of HELCOM and supported by the EU-funded PROTECT BALTIC project (Grant number 101112866).”*





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