

Championing macro-regional policy in Europe - Baltic

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Developing Europe's regional seas sustainably
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic
- Technical

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Baltic countries are stepping up co-operation to tackle common marine challenges in the region. The EU Baltic Sea Strategy focuses on four areas: building a sustainable environment, economic development, making the region more attractive and accessible, and safety and security.

4. Overview of the case

This is the first time that a comprehensive Strategy, covering several Community policies, is targeted on a 'macro-region'. It can be a model for other macro-regions. It is a key step towards implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Home to 100 million people, the Baltic Sea region has a coastline of 8000km and is shared by eight Member States viz. Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark as well as Russia. Since the EU enlargement of 2004, challenges facing the Region have increased: escalating environmental threats, gaps in economic development and poor transport accessibility are issues which need to be tackled urgently. Despite years of collaborative action to improve the condition of the sea, it continues to deteriorate. With an average depth of only 58 metres, it is losing its quality and biodiversity due to excessive discharges of nitrates and phosphates – from agriculture, industry and domestic sources. These flow into the sea, causing increasing eutrophication. This algal blooming turns large areas of the sea into stinking green slime which deoxygenates the water and kills off many of the species living in the affected area. It takes more than 30 years for the waters to change completely, so pollution is a particular problem.

One of the key weaknesses of the region is the low level of internal competitive pressure. Some countries in the region do not have a market big enough to promote needed competition. The only solution is to integrate the region more closely. The East and the North remain too isolated from the rest of the Union, which is, increasingly a gateway from Asia. Northern Finland, Sweden and the Baltic States have the lowest accessibility rates in the whole of Europe. Many of these problems can only be

addressed through better coordination and joint action. The EU is well-placed to facilitate this. Therefore, in 2005, the European Union requested the Commission to come up with a living strategy to ensure the region's future is brighter. The European Council endorsed the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in October 2009 under the Swedish EU Presidency. Over the course of 2010 et seq., the Strategy will be implemented with a stakeholder forum scheduled for 13-15 October 2010 in Tallinn, Estonia.

b) Objectives

The goal is to improve competitiveness in the region. The Strategy also aims at coordinating action by Member States, regions, the EU, pan-Baltic organisations, financing institutions and non-governmental bodies to promote a more balanced development of the Region. Promoting marine spatial planning and joint research programmes are included.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

Implementation is largely a matter for the Member states. Under the Helsinki Convention, a Baltic Sea Action Plan which aims to achieve a healthy sea by 2021 is being implemented. The ongoing implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive will further strengthen these efforts.

b) ICZM tools

An action plan prepared by the Commission has put forward 80 projects that will lead the way in meeting 15 inter-linked priorities. The projects cover improvements to the environment (e.g. reducing nitrate and phosphate levels in the Baltic Sea), efforts to increase prosperity (e.g. promoting entrepreneurship), better accessibility (e.g. improving transport links), and promoting safety and security (e.g. better accident response). The strategy offers a framework and following it will provide people with the certainty that they are building a better Baltic Sea Region. The four cornerstones of the strategy are couched in such a way that almost nothing is excluded. The Commission, having decided to go for a structured rather than selective approach, created a framework made up of priorities, actions which are continuous and projects which have a deadline for their completion. By doing so, it set up a methodology which can endure while the individual goals, and the means to achieve them, change in line with the region's evolution, making it adaptable. Not only does this mean the strategy can be used to structure an approach to the region for years to come, but it also allows every participant to have its priorities recognised within the strategy. Not all the priorities will have been embraced by every player, but every player has a priority which is addressed. The Strategy will be assessed and updated every few years as the countries take the EU Presidency as it is rotated.

7. Cost and resources

Although the strategy itself does not have its own financing, between 2007-2013 the Baltic will benefit under Regional Policy and other EU funding:

- Making the Baltic environmentally sustainable: €9.8 billion has been earmarked, including €3.1 billion to process waste water.
- Making the Baltic competitive: €6.7 billion has been earmarked, including €2.4 billion for Innovation in SMEs.
- Making the Baltic accessible: €27.1 billion has been earmarked: Information Society, €1.4 billion, transport €23.1 billion, energy €2.6 billion.
- Making the Baltic safe and secure through risk prevention: €697 million has been earmarked.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

The Commission, the European Parliament, the Member States and all the stakeholders in the region are exploring a new way of working together. A way not based on money, or on special laws, or even on new institutions, but on the will of people to co-operate to solve the problems of a region. This macro-regional strategy is not limited by national or regional frontiers, nor

by specific policy areas. There is a need for positive change – the extent of which will only be limited by the willingness of partners to act. The strategy hits the ground running with suggestions that build on measures that are already in place, if fragmented, in a bid to tackle the main challenges and seize the main opportunities.

9. Success and Fail factors

The strategy has benefited from an exceptional level of commitment from partners and stakeholders at every level. Real improvements are underway and their success, and the success of the strategy as a whole, depends on the many partners in the region and the support from the highest political levels in all countries.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

If successful, this pioneering initiative could serve as a model for other European regions like the Danube and the Black Sea. The Commission will share the results, knowledge and good practice of the implementation with the Regional Seas Conventions for the North Sea, the Mediterranean and the Black Seas.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region at a glance (2009) The European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy
- The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea (2010) The European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy
- http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/baltic/index_en.htm



EU strategy for the baltic sea region - 2010 (4.67 MB) 



EU strategy for the baltic sea region - at a glance (722.05 KB) 