

Challenges of the Baltic Sea

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, convening in Stockholm, Sweden, on 30th and 31st October 2008:

- Notes that for 30 years, the countries around the Baltic Sea have been working together to reduce the negative impact of human activities on the Baltic Sea marine environment.

- Notes that there is still a lot to be done to reduce this negative impact and preserve the unique ecosystems of the Baltic Sea.

Further notes:

- That the European Parliament has urged and the European Council has invited the European Commission to launch the work on an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

- That eutrophication is defined as the primary concern for the Baltic Sea.

- That dead coastal sea beds are a growing problem for the Baltic Sea.

- That hazardous substances, such as dioxin in fish, are still much too high to be safe for human consumption.

- That the Baltic Sea's crowded shipping lanes are becoming busier and the number of oil tankers is increasing and therefore so to is the risk of an accident occurring, resulting in large-scale oil spills.

Considering that the acute situation is not just a responsibility for the Baltic Sea States and that the future of the Baltic Sea lies in the hands of everyone whose activities have an impact on the marine environment, ELDR calls upon its member parties, liberal governments and organizations to:

- Make the Baltic Sea a priority on the highest political level, both in the Baltic Sea states and throughout the EU.

- Acknowledge that a holistic approach is essential for a successful Baltic Sea region, namely combining environmental issues, competitive issues and labour issues for a dynamic and flourishing region.

- Have the ambition to deal with the environmental issues of the Baltic Sea with a cross-sectoral ecosystem-based approach.

- Urge Russia to take a greater interest and become an active partner in the Baltic Sea region in order to meet environmental, social and economic challenges.

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- Strive to create a business friendly environment and encourage people to setup and manage businesses. Consequently, we call for cutting administrative costs and creating a more transparent and flexible regulatory framework at the European, regional and national levels.
- Stimulate innovation and growth, especially within the green technology sector.
- Introduce an emissions trading scheme for shipping in the region. The revenue generated from the trading scheme should mainly go to funding environmental improvements and efforts in the Baltic Sea.
- Explore the possibility of introducing a trading scheme for nitrogen and phosphorus in the Baltic Sea, in order to deal with the problems of eutrophication and dead sea beds. The revenue generated from the trading scheme should mainly go to funding environmental improvements and efforts in the Baltic Sea region.
- Introduce a zoning system to preserve, protect and administrate certain sensitive areas in the Baltic Sea.
- Ban emptying of sewage directly into the Baltic Sea.
- Ban substandard ships in the Baltic Sea in order to reduce the risk of shipping accidents.
- Reduce oil dependency, cut the levels of CO2-emissions and promote renewable energy.
- Improve peoples' knowledge and understanding of the Baltic Sea situation and strengthen a common identity through various educational exchange programmes and to support cooperation and continuous dialogue with and within civil societies.

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