

Rescue the Baltic Sea

Urgency resolution

ELDR Congress 10-12 September

The summer of 1997 showed that tolerance threshold of the environment in the Baltic sea is menacingly close. Children and dogs were not able to swim because of the mass development of poisonous algae. In 1995, some 20 poisonous species of algae were noted in the Baltic Sea. Besides microscopic algae, the generation of other biomass in the sea has increased. A connected problem is the expanding areas of seabed with no oxygen, which are wiping out various organisms and creating wide dead areas.

The Baltic is a small sea with few species and is therefore sensitive to external disruption. Its waters renew slowly. This is one of the reasons why the concentration of poisonous substances accumulates in species living in the Baltic and why the area of oxygen-less seabed is spreading. This is mainly a result of decades of negligence concerning wastewater emissions containing phosphor and Nox-es and the failure to improve cultivating methods as fast as would be necessary in addition to the use of large quantities of fertilizers.

Discharges of oil are regularly recurring environmental problems in the Baltic. The Baltic has suffered several disasters. Minor oil spills usually attract little public attention despite the fact that, in total, they constitute considerable environmental disruption for life in the sea.

The Baltic Sea is surrounded by highly industrialised EU member states: Germany, Finland, Denmark and Sweden. Four of the countries bordering the Baltic have applied for membership of the EU: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The development in Russia has made St Petersburg to one of the most important Baltic Sea cities.

The idea of the Baltic as a European inland sea is becoming a reality through the numerous joint projects at various levels currently in progress around the Baltic. An integrated and equal Baltic region is the basis for stable and peaceful development in northern Europe.

The ELDR considers that:

- The aim of the EU enlargement is that all the Baltic sea states should become members as soon as possible. This is very important none the least for being able to rescue the environment in the Baltic sea. The Baltic sea should be regarded as the EU's inland sea.

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- The Commission should actively support efforts for common environmental minimum standards around the Baltic sea. The states around the Baltic sea should make up a list of dangerous dumpings which have been made in the Baltic. This could be organised at a EU level.
- The EU should introduce a new joint financing instrument for the projects between the Member states and this TACIS and PHARE countries around the Baltic. Financing environmental projects aiming at cutting emissions radically should be given priority. The EU's activities around the Baltic should seek to complement and further current joint projects in consultation with other players in the region such as HELCOM. .
- International binding rules for shipping oil and other environmentally hazardous cargoes should be drawn up. All oil tankers sailing in the Baltic should be fitted double bottoms. A programme to change over the tankers with double hulls should be drawn up. Port dues should always include waste disposal and tank cleaning to avoid discharges at sea. Vessels carrying environmentally hazardous cargoes should only be allowed to use selected I safe routes in the Baltic,
- The Commission should take active responsibility for the development co-operation around the Baltic Sea and co-ordinate efforts to strengthen progress toward democracy. the rule of law and human rights around the Baltic.

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