



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Promemoria

2010-03-01

Ministry of the Environment

Ambassador for Marine Environment

Gabriella Lindholm

**Synergies in implementing the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

---

During the Swedish EU-presidency the EU developed and adopted the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Strategy has an integrated approach addressing the future challenges of the region. The situation of the marine environment and the prosperity of the region are two interlinked challenges. To strengthen the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan has been a key issue for the Strategy. The Strategy can play an important role on two levels:

Firstly, it highlights the interlinkage between different policy areas, and the need for closer coordination between EU-regional-, agricultural-, transport-, fisheries- and marine policies.

Secondly, it includes an action plan with a number of priority areas and flagship projects that will enhance the efforts of the EU member states in their work to implement the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Importantly it opens up for EU supportive actions for the Baltic Sea as a pilot project under the marine directive.

We – and other EU countries around the Baltic Sea – have committed ourselves to full implementation of all the priority areas and flagship projects of our responsibility. The strategy was adopted at highest political level, by the European Council. To this end a number of activities have started and the work will be evaluated in 2011 when Poland holds the Presidency of the EU. For the Swedish commitment in the implementation of the Strategy, a secretariat has been established at the government's offices and many authorities are involved in the implementation process.

Through the Strategy, EU is emphasising the economic importance of the Baltic Sea Region in Europe. It is a signal of how increased EU involvement in the Baltic Sea region can be good for EU at large. The environmental status of the Baltic Sea is key for the future prosperity of the region. Another potential with the Strategy is opportunities for improved matching between EU policy and regional priorities. This also means increased contacts between EU policy and regional organisations and actors. HELCOM is one such organisation and actor.

As I mentioned, the Strategy has a clear aim at strengthening the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, let me therefore say a few words on the work of HELCOM.

At regional level HELCOM and the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) adopted in 2007 has developed to become a well functioning organisation and instrument to increase political commitment and trigger actions to save the Baltic Sea. The Action

Plan defines the ambition of proposed actions based on the capacity of the sea.

HELCOM:s Baltic Sea Action Plan consists of four components – eutrophication, hazardous substances, biological diversity and the environmental impact of shipping. All these areas are covered in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The biggest challenge in the Baltic Sea Action Plan is of course eutrophication. A well known fact is that about 30 % of the bottom area is dead and water below 70 meters suffer from lack of oxygen. The BSAP means that we, for the first time, have agreed to put a cap on our nutrient loads to the sea. Under the cap each individual country will manage the actions needed to fulfil the targets. In the Strategy several flagship projects aim at strengthening efforts to combat eutrophication: for example ban on phosphates in detergents, efforts for cleaner waste water, and improving agricultural practices to decrease leaching of nutrients.

(In this context I want to commend the development of the BalticDeal project by the Baltic Farmers association. The aim is to strengthen agricultural advisory services and information activities around the Baltic Sea to improve environmental and agricultural practices to reduce nutrient losses. )

With the upcoming HELCOM ministerial meeting in Moscow in May the work on BSAP will enter an implementation phase. We need efforts from all stakeholders to reach the tough targets set in the BSAP. The Baltic Sea Action Summit in Helsinki last month, showed a broad commitment from the

business sector. I expect this meeting will also mean a strong message to governments and the EU commission to take firm action for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The EU Commission is a key player to achieve results. They have to work closely with EU member states if we are to reach the tough targets set in the marine strategy framework directive, and the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Let me underline to you one of the main challenges for the incoming Swedish Presidency in HELCOM. Eight out of nine riparian countries in the Baltic Sea Region are today EU member states. To reach the goals of the Baltic Sea Action Plan it is important to get support from EU policies – Common Agriculture Policy, the Chemical Policy, Common Fisheries Policy and the Water Policy. The implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive has to go hand in hand with and be supportive in the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

EU provides with the legal framework and policy instruments to implement the proposed actions. EU, and the Commission, plays a central role since the environmental policy, as well as the agricultural and fisheries policies apply to the whole of EU. We know that their implementation has a decisive impact on the environmental status of the Baltic Sea. Both the Marine Directive and the Baltic Sea Action Plan require that Good Environmental Status should be achieved within time-limits. We hope that the EU

Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region can help the EU Baltic Sea countries and the commission to improve the coordination of policies to achieve targets set.

The regional requirements must influence the implementation of EU policy. Regional characteristics should also be taken into account in developing future EU policies. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should be seen as a tool in contributing to the development of new macro-regional approaches in the EU.

I believe that the value added with the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region lies in creating a new cross-sectorial and regional perspective that contributes towards EU taking its responsibility to implement the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

I hope that the implementation of the Strategy will contribute to the endeavour of adapting the agriculture policy, the fisheries policy, the chemicals policy and other policies to regional priorities. This is indeed a challenging task. The Strategy is not only about projects, project development must go hand in hand with policy development, taking the regional perspective into account. A result could be the reduction of nutrient runoff and a more eco-system based fisheries management. With the Strategy we take important steps in that direction.

Selecting the Baltic Sea as a pilot project under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive would mean that the work within the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan – where we set a stricter time-table and conduct tougher actions than required in the directive – would be recognized in the framework of the marine

directive. Therefore, HELCOM has written to the Commission about the pilot project. In the Baltic Sea region we do not only have the potential of becoming a model region, we will make use of all possibilities and actually become one.

The Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region also deals with the central issue of financing. The Strategy will not bring new financial resources to the region from the EU budget, but it will contribute to a very necessary discussion on how we use our resources to achieve results. The Strategy will also contribute to a better match of EU resources with other financing possibilities, for example banks, private foundations and other stakeholders.

Let me mention that the Nordic Investment Bank and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation have established a technical assistance fund to prepare investment projects for implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan. The Swedish Government has contributed 90 million crowns to the fund. The purpose of the fund is to speed up investments and to create possibilities for stakeholders to stimulate new project developments. To identify new investment projects is important in the new EU member states particularly in this financial crisis. The resources of each individual country, the resources of the banks, and the EU resources must be used efficiently to improve the environmental status of the Baltic Sea.

The Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region contains priority actions which require the cooperation by regional stakeholders for successful implementation. The regional stakeholders will also play an important

role in the discussion about the implementation and future content of the Strategy.

I hope I have been able to point out that there are significant synergy effects to achieve through the interaction between the BSAP and the Baltic Sea Strategy. Add to that the active participation and engagement by a broad range of stakeholders. For the Baltic Sea there is a lot to win by us all working together – decisively, creatively and swiftly.