

**Contribution of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region of 25.09.08**

- I Mecklenburg-Vorpommern welcomes the preparation of an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region by June 2009, as well as the preparatory efforts in this direction, already made by the Commission. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern favours a close involvement - by the European Commission - of the stakeholders in working out this strategy. It is before all the coastal regions as essential supports of co-operation in the Baltic Sea region and which are the future “stakeholders” of such a strategy which may add a major contribution to this effort.  
Being a region situated on the Baltic, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern would like to submit its own proposals and evaluations to the preparations for such a strategy. As a part of such efforts, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern would also like to focus its attention on certain focal areas. This paper is meant to be a contribution to the debate for conferences, round tables and discussions on a Baltic Sea strategy monitored by the Commission. Such fora shall also be held in supra-regional Baltic Sea bodies, amongst the regions in the Baltic Sea area and within Germany, too.
- II The EU strategy for the Baltic Sea offers an opportunity to identify present needs to be acted upon in the Baltic Sea region and to present steps to cope. To that extent, this strategy ties in with previous Commission initiatives. After the three Baltic States and Poland joined the European Union and in view of the dynamic development of the Baltic Sea region, stocktaking is as important as is the employment of the more comprehensive instruments offered by EU membership to all immediate riparian states of the Baltic Sea – with the exception of Russia – to cope with these challenges.
- III The Baltic Sea strategy of the EU represents a political value *per se*. It may contribute to a stronger ensconcement of the Baltic Sea region into the awareness at a European level. Also, it may make clear that Europe has a clearer northern dimension than ever before.
- IV In the region, the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea area will be juxtaposed to a number of political approaches. These have already been in operation and come with different objectives. Here one would have to mention before all the Northern Dimension, the European Integrated Maritime Policy (to be underpinned by additional national maritime policies in future), the Marine Strategy directive, also requiring support by national regulations as well as BASP (the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan). To make for a cohesive approach, such existing approaches should be integrated into the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea area to the largest extent possible. Doing so, subject overlap as well as setting up new structures and bodies should be avoided in equal measure.
- V Consistent implementation as well as observance of existing EU legislation – in particular with respect to the environment, maritime safety and fishery – should be given preference over new legal provisions. A Baltic Sea strategy must not end in establishing new competencies. Also, the principle of subsidiarity must be respected during preparation and implementation. In addition, measures aimed at in the EU Strategy – i.a. in the fields of environment, transport or maritime safety - should not lead to a distortion of competition in regard to other European regions.

- VI** The European Maritime Policy, adopted by the European Council on 14 December 2007, representing a far-reaching horizontal political approach, requires regional specification and implementation in large sections. With that in mind, the Baltic Sea strategy should be used as an instrument to implement a regional-level integrated European Maritime Policy in the Baltic Sea area. To that extent, the focal points listed in the previous position paper of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern<sup>1</sup> (marine research, maritime clusters, maritime safety and training in marine transport, monitoring at sea, spatial planning at sea, and coastal protection) are also relevant for a Baltic Sea strategy.
- VII** The EU's strategy for the Baltic Sea area as an overarching concept for development may only result in a satisfactory outcome if all the Baltic's riparian states will be involved. This refers to Russia before all. Considerable success was achieved, for instance, in the context of the Northern Dimension, as a regional instrument for co-operation with Russia in northern Europe. Over the past few years, this has represented an essential focus for the field of environmental partnership. Over and above, it will be necessary to guarantee some trans-sectoral involvement of Russia and to bring about hands-on co-operation in various sectors (such as transport, culture and tourism).
- VIII** For other measures, the area of consideration of a Baltic Sea strategy should not just consider the immediate riparian states and regions only. Bearing in mind an effect-related approach, states bordering on the former should at least be involved indirectly. To quote an example: Regarding the release of pollutants into the Baltic Sea or the flow of transport over wide areas it is not sufficient to consider states directly bordering on the Baltic Sea.
- IX** Specifically:
1. Notwithstanding numerous activities in the coastal zone areas, there is a dearth of instruments for effective, integrated planning measures or for the implementation of the latter. Only a small number of EU member states introduced **maritime spatial planning** for their territorial waters. Not only when compared to other regions of Europe but also by world standards, the Baltic Sea and its coastal areas are subject to quite intensive use. This results in a correspondingly high level of conflicting uses. One such is the necessary clearance for maritime shipping on the one hand and the siting of offshore wind farms on the other. When working together, EU member states and their neighbours may find replies to the challenges presented in coastal zones. These may take into account both national and international conditions, but also reflect co-ordination. Thus, the Baltic Sea area may be a model case.
  2. It was with that specific objective in mind that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern purposefully took up funds in the context of INTERREG III B quite early. This was aimed at providing a contribution by spatial planning to an integrated analysis of the coast and the sea in general, but also - and specifically - to the **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)**. Over and above, such transnational projects were to be pursued like "Balt-Coast" in the context of which Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (together with partners from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland and Sweden) studied "an extension of spatial planning to offshore sections within the 12 sm-zone and international waters" as well as the "spatial planning for the integrated development of sensitive coastal areas (both sea and land-side)". Results to be expected might also be of interest to other regions of Europe (such as in the context of the "Spatial Planning in Coastal Zones –

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<sup>1</sup> See the contribution of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to the consultation on an Integrated European Maritime Policy [http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/contributions\\_post/185.html](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/contributions_post/185.html)

PlanCoast“ project<sup>2</sup> in the regions of the Baltic and Adriatic Seas) and could also be integrated into initiatives by the European Commission<sup>3</sup>.

3. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern advocates both the improvement and the **sustainable use of the natural resources** of the Baltic Sea. In particular these include the following focal points: improving water quality, sustainable management of fish stocks, need-adjusted marine raw materials production, expansion of off-shore energy networks compatible with the marine environment and comprehensive monitoring and control of maritime transport.
4. The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), as adopted on 15 November 2007, which also involves Russia, as for its contents underpins the EU's Marine Strategy directive as a regional action plan for the Baltic Sea. It defines required action at national, regional, European and international levels, which is aimed at restoring a healthy marine environment in the Baltic Sea by 2012. The BSAP claims to take up all essential issues affecting the Baltic Sea's marine environment. High (phosphorus and nitrate) nutrient inflows result in eutrophication, turbid waters, lack of oxygen and dying sea beds in the Baltic Sea. BASP therefore provides for a coast-line length and actual removal level-related reduction of organic pollution by riparian states. Now this should be implemented for all the riparian states of the Baltic Sea as fast as possible. As viewed from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the BASP should be seen as an “**environmental pillar**” for the **Baltic Sea strategy**. The question of whether - in view of the comprehensive approach involved in the BASP (and the additional national marine strategies to be developed) - additional measures are required should be closely examined therefore. Any overlap is to be avoided.
5. As for the fisheries sector, strategies should be developed for a sustainable securing and consolidation of **fishing stocks of the Baltic Sea**. Doing so, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is of the view that an “aquaculture-based-fisheries management” approach should be pursued also. Further studies should be initiated into improving living conditions of cod and herring and there should also be an exchange of views regarding relevant experience and information.
6. The Baltic Sea strategy should also emphasise determined action against **illegal fishing** in the Baltic Sea area. In view of the implementation of the common fisheries policy, all member states in the Baltic Sea area should consistently and systematically monitor the **observance of fishing quotas and regulations** by appropriately qualified personnel. Any violations should be punishable by transparent and drastic steps. There is no need for additional regulations; emphasis should rather be put on a uniform application and implementation of the existing set of rules.
7. In recent years, much progress was reached in the fields of **maritime safety and monitoring of the seas**. This was achieved on the basis of international and EU regulations. Such progress was also a result of multilateral co-operation in the Baltic Sea area. These efforts will have to be continued. In the context of the Baltic Sea strategy they also need to be defined more specifically. This concerns monitoring and controlling increasing shipping traffic – one the one hand with a view to dangerous cargoes and on the other with a view to monitoring the Baltic Sea for purposes such as the protection of the environment, fisheries or in the interests of fighting crime.

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<sup>2</sup> see <http://www.plancoast.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> as last mentioned in the Green Paper for a European Maritime Policy

8. **Measures to improve maritime safety** as adopted in the context of the so-called Erika packages resulted in considerable progress for the Baltic Sea area also. In November 2005 the Commission submitted its "Third maritime safety package" and it proposed seven complementary measures. Both the Council and the European Parliament should reach agreement as soon as possible on the items still under dispute, so that these measures could enter into force soon.
9. There is support for the proposal in the Blue Paper on European Maritime Policy on a trans-sectoral, inter-operable marine surveillance system, which was taken up by Sweden. When setting up such integrated network, specific attention should be devoted to the potential of **GALILEO**-based applications in future. Under certain circumstances, the Baltic Sea may be considered a "testing range". First experience is available in the context of the research port of the city of Rostock.
10. **Climate change** raises challenges that concern the Baltic Sea area. These should also be considered in the context of the Baltic Sea strategy of the EU. What is needed are both measures to protect the climate as well as steps to adapt to the changes in climate consequences. With that in mind, transnational projects aimed at an exchange of knowledge in the Baltic Sea area should be given specific support. Pilot projects which might be considered in the context of climate protection might be studies for a standardised introduction of land-based electricity supplies of commercial ships in port as well as the design of more environment-friendly ship propulsion devices, for instance based on natural gas. These would meet future higher demands regarding vessel emissions in the Baltic Sea<sup>4</sup>, especially.  
The ASTRA project, funded by INTERREG III B, provided comprehensive recommendations, worked out on a transnational basis, for adaptation strategies to climate change in the Baltic Sea area. As part of the EU's Baltic Sea strategy, experience gained in this context should be pooled with the results of other studies. To the extent that makes sense, there should also be joint implementation.
11. In recognition of its status as one of Europe's priority energy infrastructure projects, the EU has designated Nord Stream as a "Project of European Interest" in its Trans-European Energy Networks (TEN-E) list. As is the case with any other infrastructure project, in order to protect the Baltic Sea the effects on the ecological equilibrium of the Baltic Sea must be analysed extensively and an open dialogue must be held with the European Parliament and the adjacent states to answer pending questions.
12. Future transport policy must bear in mind more than hitherto the relevance of user-oriented **shipping and ferry traffic** across the Baltic. It must serve to implement a European sea transport area without any boundaries. In its communications on the plan of action for freight transport logistics<sup>5</sup> and on a European ports policy<sup>6</sup> the Commission outlined that - as a result of various circumstances - maritime transport within the Community is at a disadvantage compared to other modes of transport. Using a ferry across the Baltic Sea and of the connecting rail and road network should be as easy as crossing a bridge. This calls for additional infrastructural adaptations but also for considerably easier bookings, customs procedures and other formalities among EU member states and within the Baltic Sea area, particularly as the transport with non-member states of the EU (Norway and Russia) is concerned.

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<sup>4</sup> regarding the future reduction of ship emissions on the Baltic Sea see [http://www.imo.org/Safety/mainframe.asp?topic\\_id=1709&doc\\_id=9123](http://www.imo.org/Safety/mainframe.asp?topic_id=1709&doc_id=9123)

<sup>5</sup> of 18 October 2007, COM [2007] 607 final.

<sup>6</sup> of 18 October 2007, COM [2007] 616 final.

13. For a strengthening of **multi-modal transport links** and compared to land-based means of transport, equivalent framework conditions are required for developing logistical centres, ports and means of transport, such as Motorways of the Sea (MoS). At present, there are totally different standards for multi-modal chains of transport (which as a rule, are shorter and more environment-friendly) in the Baltic Sea, particularly for cross-border transport, representing a burden on the exchange of goods and passenger services. Multi-modal transports within the EU must be adapted to the level of standards developed by the European Commission for end-to-end land-based modes of transportation.
14. So-called **green transport corridors** in the sense of the communication by the Commission on the action plan for freight transport logistics should be developed as examples for the Baltic Sea area, represented by intermodal transport. Opportunities for such developments might be offered by international corridors, where rail/ ship/ rail-links operate well already now and which have also shown strong growth. Examples are the East-West corridor Vilnius - Klaipeda/Baltisk - Karlshamn/Sassnitz - Copenhagen/Berlin, as well as the North-South corridor Copenhagen - Gedser/Trelleborg-Rostock/Sassnitz - Berlin, inclusive of their respective hinterland connections. This item should also be considered when revising the TEN-T programmes.
15. In the communications mentioned above the Commission announced appropriate measures to improve intra-EU sea transport. Amongst others, these should be guided by improved and consistent employment of the chances offered by ICT technologies ("E-freight"). As part of the Baltic Sea strategy, the chances of **E-Freight** (and those of procedures beyond) should be assessed. They should be implemented as a first stage in the context of intra-Community sea transport in the Baltic Sea area. A second stage should involve Baltic Sea riparian states which are not members of the EU.
16. In the context of TEN-T the links with the Baltic Sea area should be improved both in the direction of North-South and East-West. These links gained significantly in importance as a result of the enlargement of the EU and increasing integration. **Priority trans-European transport axes**, linking South and North Europe will have to be adapted to these circumstances. In this context, transport connections with the German ports on the Baltic Sea, as well as the integration of the MoS into the TEN-T programme assume special importance. With that objective in mind, trans-European transport axes should be extended up to the German ports on the Baltic Sea (or they should be extended from the latter). This should be also included in graphic displays, together with the MoS links. This especially refers to the priority TEN-T projects Nos 1 and 22. The revision of the TEN-T guidelines, planned for 2010, should be used for this adaptation procedure<sup>7</sup>.  
Over and above such adaptation steps, the focal point of the TEN-T policy should be concentrated on an implementation of current (priority) projects as well as on dovetailing land and sea-based systems.
17. As far as transnational axes are concerned<sup>8</sup>, the northern link is very important for the Baltic Sea area. What is decisive is efficient goods transport to and from Russia and a continuation of this axis via the Baltic Sea as an element of short sea shipping. Short sea shipping links between the eastern and the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea and connecting combined modes of rail transport must be seen as the most important link between the "**Northern Axis**" with central parts of Europe.

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<sup>7</sup> In this context see also: Annual activity report by coordinator Karel van Miert on TEN-T Nr. 1, July 2007  
<sup>8</sup> see Communication from the Commission on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries, COM (2007) 32, final – 31 January 2007, and Communication from the Commission concerning the progress of exploratory talks regarding cooperation in the field of transport with neighbouring countries, 125, final – 5 March 2008, COM (2008) 125.

18. The transport backbone of the Baltic Sea area is to be improved further. Also, it shall be connected with other European areas. This is of outstanding importance to generate an impetus for economic development by way of a co-operative and integrated spatial, transport and economic development. In this context, the **Baltic-Adriatic area development corridor** - reaching from Scandinavia via the eastern German federal states to the Adriatic Sea – assumes specific relevance. When implementing its Territorial Agenda, the EU should therefore enshrine it as an important element for a balanced socio-economic and poly-centric development of the EU area.
19. **Tourism** is a major economic factor in the Baltic Sea area. However, it specifically depends on other sectors, such as sea and land-based infrastructure, environmental conditions and water quality. Therefore it is necessary that tourism as a cross-sectoral objective shall be sufficiently considered in the initiatives taken by the Commission in other fields of policy, such as transport, environment, climate change and demographics, reflecting conditions in the Baltic Sea area. Furthermore, the Commission may take flanking measures aimed at a further extension of competitive and sustainable tourism within its competencies and the opportunities at its disposal<sup>9</sup>. To this end available sources of information, such as the YepaT database, promoted by the EU in the context of Interreg III B may be brought into play. As part of such efforts, standards may be harmonised and projects at a similar level in different countries may be brought together<sup>10</sup>.
20. Education, science, research and innovation play major role in the Baltic Sea area. Networking has advanced considerably and the **ScanBalt network** (ScanBalt fmba) in the field of life sciences has served as a model. The formation and extension of such clusters of excellency should be purposefully supported in the context of existing EU programmes.
21. The European strategy for **marine and maritime research**<sup>11</sup> should also be implemented in a way specifically aimed at the Baltic Sea region. It is in this way that existing potentials of science and research, inclusive of existing networks, may be promoted and extended in the best possible manner in the spirit of this strategy. Practical involvement of Russia should be provided for. With regard to contributions by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, attention is directed to the Warnemuende-based Institute for Baltic Sea Research (IOW) as an example. Details may be gleaned from the contribution by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to implementing the green paper on an Integrated European Maritime Policy<sup>12</sup>.
22. A sustainable development and the stability of the Baltic Sea region also needs confidence-based and broadly-founded co-operation with Baltic Sea riparian states not in the EU. Before all, this concerns the Russian Federation. Last but not least this also applies for actors on the local and regional levels. To promote **co-operation on culture and on civil society** and in order to strengthen mutual understanding, the participation of players from these countries in projects with partners from the EU ought to be facilitated. It is in this sense that the “Europe for citizens” programme of the EU should be opened up for an involvement of these players from Russia. This might follow the example of INTERREG IV-B programme for the Baltic Sea area. Accordingly project funds may also be used outside the EU on a limited scale, on condition that they benefit the project partners from within the EU.

<sup>9</sup> See Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism, 19 October 2007, COM [2007] 621 final  
<sup>10</sup> [www.agora-tourism.net](http://www.agora-tourism.net)

<sup>11</sup> Communication from the Commission, 3 September 2008, COM [2008] 534, final.

<sup>12</sup> See the contribution of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to the consultation on an Integrated European Maritime Policy [http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/contributions\\_post/185.html](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/contributions_post/185.html)