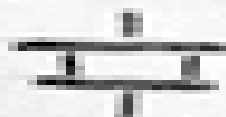
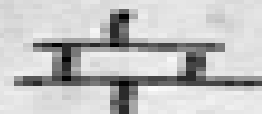


# **Baltic Sea Region Strategy**

## **A Critical Commentary**



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*'What, me? Unemployed?  
Well, I didn't see that coming'*

- **There is a great deal at stake on the successful implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy.**
- **The outgoing Regional Commissioner, Danuta Hübner, stated on a number of occasions that the strategy could become a template for other macro-regions in the EU.**
- **The strategy faces a number of challenges that have to overcome for it to prove effective.**
- **These challenges relate to its value adding potential, the governance arrangements, the cohesion of the EU and the external effectiveness of the strategy.**

# Challenges

- In terms of adding value, the risk is that the strategy encompasses a very ambitious set of actions in order to satisfy the majority of Baltic stakeholders and may prove to be undeliverable.
- There is an argument for trying to keep the strategy more simple and to concentrate efforts on a smaller but strategically vital set of objectives.
- For example, the progress made by HELCOM in its Baltic Sea Action Plan – is it necessary to reconfigure efforts in environmental improvement?

# Challenges

- **Those member states in most need of the strategy are the least involved in its implementation.**
- **Commission has struggled to balance a complex of actions with a complex of 19/20 Directorates General and a range of member states.**

Pillar/priority areas	Coordinating countries	Number of actions
<b>Pillar 1: To make the Baltic Sea an ally sustainable place</b>		
1) To reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels	Poland/Finland	5
2) To preserve natural zones and biodiversity, including fisheries	Germany	2
3) To reduce the use and impact hazardous substances	Sweden	3
4) To become a model region for clean shipping	Denmark	2
5) To mitigate and adapt to climate change	Denmark	3
<b>Pillar II: To make the Baltic Sea region prosperous place</b>		
6) To remove hindrances to the internal market in the Baltic Sea	Estonia	6
7) To exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation	Sweden/Poland	2
8) Implementing the small Business Act: to promote entrepreneurship, strengthen SMEs and increase the efficient use of human resources	Denmark	9
9) To reinforce sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries	Finland	7
<b>Pillar III: to make the Baltic Sea region an accessible and attractive place</b>		
10) To improve the access to, and efficiency and security of the energy markets	Latvia/Denmark	3
11) To improve internal and external transport links	Lithuania/Sweden	
12) To maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region in particular through education, tourism and health	Tourism: Germany (Mecklenburg -Vorpommern) Health: Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health Education: Germany	10
<b>Pillar IV: To make the Baltic region a safe and secure place</b>		
13) To become a leading region in maritime safety and security	Finland/Denmark	
14) To reinforce protection from major emergencies at sea and on land	Denmark	2
15) To decrease the volume of, and harm done by, cross border crime	Finland	3
<b>Horizontal Actions</b>	European Commission	10



- **Differences between the European Parliament resolution and the Commission communication.**
- **The Commission takes an internal EU perspective of the Council whereas the Parliament resolution refers to a “Baltic Sea Region Strategy for the Northern Dimension.”**
- **The Parliament resolution calls on the Commission to present a proposal for a strategy “in order to reinforce the internal pillar of the Northern Dimension”.**
- **The Parliament links the Baltic Sea strategy to the Northern Dimension framework, whereas the Council and the Commission make a distinction between the strategy and the external aspects of cooperation.**

- **There are important differences of view regarding the appropriate governance structure.**
- **The Commission's strategy centres upon the coordination of existing initiatives, continuously reviewing progress and maintain the momentum of the Action Plan.**
- **The Commission's approach is to keep institutional mechanisms to a minimum with no additional funding for the Baltic Sea strategy.**

- **The Parliament proposes to hold an annual Baltic Sea summit before the summer European Council and to expand regional organisational bodies inside and outside the EU system, in part by proposing an own budget line for the strategy.**
- **EESC supports the call for a separate budget for the strategy.**
- **It would appear that the Parliament wishes to see a more ambitious policy development than the Commission.**

- **The external dimension of the strategy is also major challenge.**
- **Russia's role in the strategy is to be handled by the Northern Dimension arrangements and presumably these are to be aligned with the strategy.**
- **Three out of the four pillars of the strategy – environmental protection, attractiveness and accessibility, and safety and security – are essentially transnational in character.**
- **Need for mechanisms within the strategy for linking the internal and external interactions, especially at an operational level.**

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*'We think you're being  
over-optimistic'*