THE FLOAT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL BALTIC INTERREG IV A PROGRAMME 2007-2013

No. 3 November 2009

CENTRAL BALTIC INTERREG IV A PROGRAMME 2007–2013

SAVING THE BALTIC SEA

The ecological well-being of the sea and regional economic prosperity are intertwined

Ville Niinistö
Chairperson of the Green Parliamentary Group
Parliament of Finland

The people in the Central Baltic countries have always lived by and off the sea. Already in pre-industrial times the Baltic Sea offered the fastest route for travel and trade, uniting communities by its shores. The sea has also offered us our livelihoods in fishing and tourism. However, it is only lately that we have come to realise that the well-being of the sea is intertwined with the well-being of our respective countries.

The ecosystem of the Baltic Sea is in bad shape. The dead seabeds of the Baltic Sea form the biggest desert in Europe. Human activities both on the sea and throughout its catchment area are exerting rapidly increasing pressure on marine ecosystems. Of the many environmental challenges, the most serious is the continuing eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.

Inputs of hazardous substances also affect the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea and the potential for its sustainable use. Depletion of fish stocks is interconnected with the poor ecological state of the sea. We need wide-scale action to address these problems.

Failure to react now would undermine both the prospects for the future recovery of the sea and its ability to react to the stress projected by climate change. Furthermore, inaction will

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affect vital resources for the future economic prosperity of the whole region and would cost tenfold more than the cost of action.

We can, and should, diminish the burden our activities impose on the sea. This can be done in all fields of life. The Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013 offers communities in these countries the possibility to tackle these problems in joint international projects.

There is a lot to be done, starting from raising awareness at the local level. Sustainable eco-tourism should be emphasised. The emissions of agriculture could be decreased by exchanging technology and increasing the share of organic farming. Sewage water treatment and waste management need to be guaranteed in order to stop community waste entering the sea. Business actors can enhance their image and take social responsibility by investing in eco-friendliness. Fragile environments should be protected. People should be given ways to enjoy the beauty of nature whilst increasing their knowledge of its fragility.

Municipalities can cooperate across the region in exchanging best practices and working jointly towards these goals. Universities and other educational institutions should combinedly increase our scientific knowledge and devise solutions to the diverse challenges of the Baltic Sea.

The Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013 has three main focuses: environmental, entrepreneurial and social opportunities. We should see these as working towards the same goal. Communities by the Baltic Sea can be successful in the long run only by promoting environmentally sound economic progress.

Philipp Schwartz
Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat

This issue of The Float has a strong focus on the programme's first priority of a safe and healthy environment. We are thankful to the two experts who agreed to share their views on this essential issue with us. Ville Niinistö, Member of the Finnish Parliament, points out that a safe and healthy environment should actually be seen as the underlying precondition for a prosperous development of the Central Baltic area. Swedish Minister for Environment Andreas Carlgren then puts environmental awareness and cooperation into the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) recently endorsed during the Swedish EU Presidency.

The Central Baltic Programme has a lot to offer and to contribute to both the improvement of the environmental condition of the Central Baltic area, but also to the success of the EUSBSR. We present you today three projects approved in the 2nd call tackling environmental issues. Regarding the strategy, extensive discussions have taken place in the programme, especially within an own Task force and the programme's Monitoring Committee. It was decided to take various practical steps to support the implementation of the strategy about which you can read more at a special strategy section on our website (www.centralbaltic.eu/EUSBSR).

If with this issue of The Float we can show both the opportunities and chances of the programme to build and ensure a safe and healthy environment in the Central Baltic area and how to hereby contribute to the success of the EUSBSR, we would be pleased. Programme-financed projects and the EUSBSR are not strictly separated things. They contribute to and at the same time benefit from each other.

WHAT CAN AN EU PRESIDENCY DO FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA?

Photo: Victor Brott

Andreas Carlgren
Minister for the Environment, Sweden

Besides the climate, another priority issue for the Swedish Presidency of the EU has been to strengthen cooperation in and raise awareness of the Baltic Sea region. This applies not least to the serious condition of the Baltic Sea environment.

Over 100 million people live in the countries around the Baltic Sea. Although the Baltic Sea states are different from each other, there is more that unites them – not least the common challenges we face. With the new Baltic Sea Strategy that the EU has adopted, new opportunities are being created to ensure sustainable regional development. In the long term, this will also mean better living conditions for the people who live and work in the Baltic Sea region.

In the Baltic Sea Strategy, the EU has stated clear goals for the Baltic Sea region for the first time. It builds on a consensus over which policy areas are crucial in achieving these goals. In drawing up the Baltic Sea Strategy, the Commission has worked with the broad support of countries, organisations, institutions and citizens in the Baltic Sea region in an unprecedented manner.

Although the climate issue was the main focus of the meeting of EU heads of state and government in October, the summit was also a milestone for the Baltic Sea Strategy, which has now been adopted at the highest political level. In December, the environment ministers will adopt supplementary Council conclusions to further strengthen the environmental dimension of the Strategy.

Other than highlighting overarching priorities, the Baltic Sea Strategy is also launching an ambitious action plan with 15 key areas and a very large number of measures, all of which are to be implemented together by the Baltic Sea states and the Commission, but with one country assuming overall responsibility.

As Minister for the Environment, I see major potential in the Baltic Sea Strategy offering a platform for the region's actors to come together to begin work on a more coordinated and focused method to improve the condition of the Baltic Sea environment. I am certain that the Baltic Sea Strategy will strengthen the prospects of EU countries fulfilling our commitments in the implementation of the Helsinki Commission's Baltic Sea Action Plan.

In the Strategy, the Baltic Sea is specified as a pilot project under the EU marine directives, which means that we can show the way forward with measures for the Baltic Sea environment. This is not just about environmental policy – the Action Plan applies to all sectors. The Baltic Sea Strategy also enables us to strengthen our possibilities to undertake long-term work to reduce nutrient leaching from agriculture and create sustainable regional fisheries.

Sweden has taken on the responsibility of limiting discharge from wastewater treatment plants, and we have banned the use of phosphates in detergents. Sweden is also pushing for phosphate use in detergents to eventually be phased out completely in the European Union.

The Baltic Sea Strategy offers us a unique opportunity to tackle the challenges of the Baltic Sea region. I am hoping for broad support in the region to further develop the potential of the Baltic Sea Strategy and to establish a better future for the Baltic Sea region and its environment.

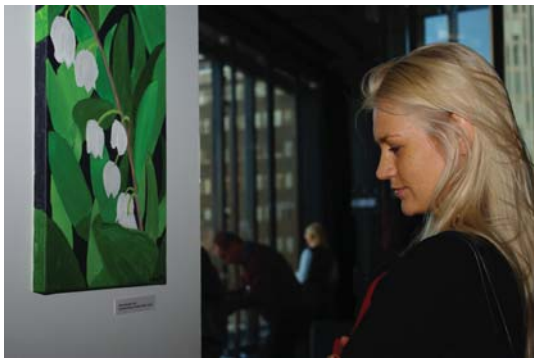
Herman van Rompuy, Fredrik Reinfeldt, Catherine Ashton and José Manuel Barroso at the informal summit in Brussels on November 19, 2009.
Photo: Gunnar Seijbold, Government Offices of Sweden

SHOWCASE CONFERENCE 2009

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN
SEPTEMBER 15

The first Central Baltic Showcase Conference gathered over 130 participants at Kulturhuset in Stockholm in mid-September 2009. The day provided the participants insight on how to put their ideas into projects within the framework of the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013. Enjoy the photos from the event that received a lot of positive feedback from the participants!

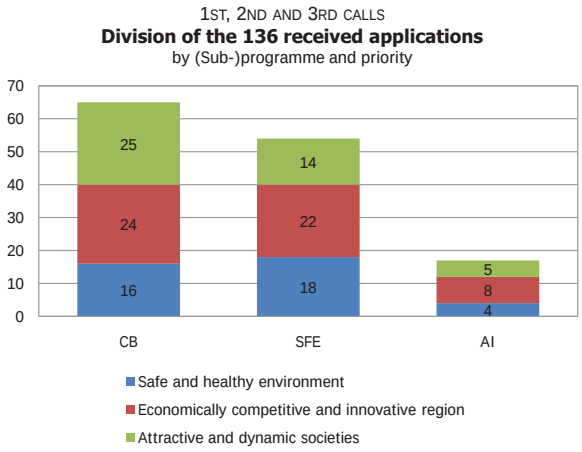
The Showcase Conference 2010 will be organised in Riga, Latvia during September/October 2010. The event will not only bring forward projects funded by the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme for the interested but also offer implementation support for the projects and insights to the ongoing processes within the central Baltic Sea region. The conference will again be a good opportunity to see what the European Regional Development money is and can be used for.



136 project applications received so far

The Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme has received altogether 136 project applications in the three first calls during 2008-2009. All (sub-)programmes as well as all priorities have proven to be interesting for the applicants as can be seen in the graph on the right.

More call-specific statistics on the applications can be downloaded from the website www.centralbaltic.eu under "Documents".

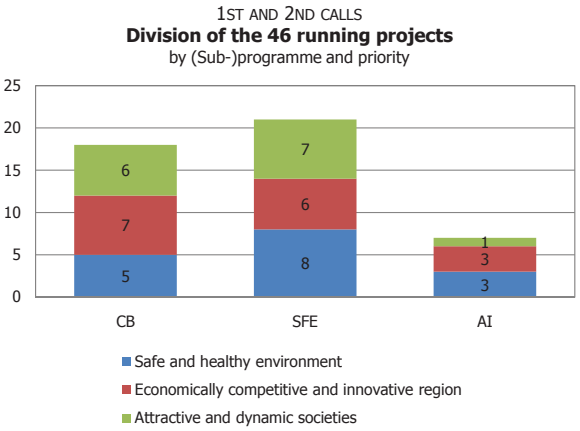


46 projects are already running!

At the moment, there are altogether 46 projects from the 1st and 2nd calls in full speed of implementation. The division between (sub-)programmes and priorities can be seen in the graph on the right.

The summaries of all these projects, the budget figures, partners etc., can be found on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu under "Projects".

CB	Central Baltic Programme
SFE	Southern Finland - Estonia Sub-programme
AI	Archipelago and Islands Sub-programme



Next calls

APPLY!

May 1-31, 2010
November 1-30, 2010

Millions of euros still available!

At the end of 2009 there are still over 60 million euros left to be committed to new projects. Although the 3rd call funding decisions during spring 2010 will take away some of this money, there will still be a lot left to be given out to new cross-border cooperation projects. There will be **two new calls for applications during 2010**, in May and in November, and the Joint Techical Secretariat is eagerly waiting to help anyone interested to apply during these calls!

Many events and activities planned for the year 2010

The Joint Technical Secretariat has planned many activities to attract new project applications and support the applicants in different ways in the process of building the project and preparing the applications. The running projects will be supported with the day-to-day implementation of their projects. See on the back of this newsletter what there is for you or visit the website www.centralbaltic.eu!

NATURE PROTECTION IN OUR COUNTRIES


Gauja National Park, Latvia

Biodiversity makes our planet not only beautiful but also habitable. But the world is witnessing a steady loss of biodiversity with devastating consequences for the natural world and for human well-being. Below are a few examples of national parks in the Central Baltic region which are established to protect our nature and halt the loss of biodiversity. Terrestrial and marine environment are equally important. HELCOM works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea through intergovernmental co-operation.


Lahemaa National Park, Estonia
Arne Ader, Loodusemees Image Library

ESTONIA

Lahemaa National Park is the first of the altogether five national parks that have been established in Estonia. It was founded in 1971 to protect the coastal environment and cultural heritage of Northern Estonia. The park covers 72 500 hectares of land and 25 090 hectares of sea. Lahemaa National Park was created to preserve values typical to Northern Estonia related to ecosystems, biodiversity and landscapes. The area consists of forests and is one of the most important areas for protection of forests in Europe, as well as of marshes and swamps, coastal ecosystems and objects of geological, historical or archaeological value.

www.lahemaa.ee

Matsalu National Park is situated on the coast of western Estonia. It was established to protect nesting, moulting and migrating birds. It covers the coastal areas and rivers flowing into the sea, 50 islands, pastures and woody meadows. The total area is 48 610 hectares. No fewer than 275 species of birds, 49 fish, 47 mammals and 772 different wetland plants have been found in the area. The most numerous birds in Matsalu are the great cormorant, common eider and herring gull.

www.matsalu.ee


Nuuksio National Park, Finland

FINLAND

Nuuksio National Park is located in the greater Helsinki area. The 45-sq.km park forms the western part of the so-called Nuuksio lake uplands, the most extensive and ecologically important continuous backwoods area in the Uusimaa Region. Because the area is affected by broken bedrock, the park consists of an intricate mosaic of habitats, where dozens of threatened and near-threatened species live. Established in 1994.

www.outdoors.fi/nuuksionp

Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park is located in the Kymenlaakso region and covers an area of nearly 7 sq.km. It is known for its diversity of bird species and its war-related history. The park includes the outer archipelago of the easternmost coastal municipalities. The hundred islands and islets of the park are scattered onto a large open sea area 60 km wide and far from the mainland or the inhabited islands. Established in 1982.

www.outdoors.fi/easterngulfoffinlandnp

LATVIA

The Gauja National Park in Vidzeme is the largest national park in Latvia, with an area of 917.45 km² running from the northeast of Sigulda to the southwest of Cēsis along the valley of the Gauja River, where the park takes its name from. It was established on 14 September 1973 and is the oldest national park in Latvia. The park is particularly noted for the Devonian sandstone cliffs, in some places as high as 90 metres, along the banks of the Gauja, particularly in the northern parts round Sigulda. In the southwest, it is mainly used by the inhabitants of Riga for leisure purposes, while further to the northeast it is more strictly protected. The area was formerly sometimes known as the "Livonian Switzerland", and tourists started visiting this area during the 19th century. Forest makes up 47% of the park's territory, mostly spruce and pine, but it also includes some deciduous growth. Of the numerous lakes in the park, the largest is Lake Ungurs.

www.gnp.gov.lv/public/eng

Ķemeri National Park is a national park in the Tukums district, Riga district, Jelgava district and Jūrmala city in Latvia. It was established in 1997 and covers an area of 381.65 km². The territory of the park is mostly occupied by forests and mires, the most significant of them being the Great Ķemeri Moorland. There are also several lakes that are former lagoons of the Littorina Sea. Ķemeri National Park is famous for the mineral waters used by health resorts located in the neighbourhood.

www.kemeri.gov.lv/ENGsakums.htm


Hamra National Park, Sweden. Photo: Magnus Andersson

SWEDEN

Hamra National Park is located in the municipality of Ljusdal in the county of Gävleborg. Hamra National Park largely consists of old-growth forest, and the main aim of the park is to keep it untouched. With its 28 hectares, it is the smallest national park today in Sweden. However, the national park will be extended to include 1150 hectares and will then consist of bog areas as well.

www.hamranationalpark.se

Gotska Sandön is the most isolated island in the Baltic sea and has fascinated visitors for centuries. It is located off the island of Gotland. The name "Gotska Sandön" literally translates as the Gotlandic Sand Island. As the name suggests, the island is a kingdom of sand with beaches extending for kilometers, but it also has elements of stone and gravel in addition to large pine forests. The environment is beneficial for a rich beetle fauna. During the summer, there are regular boat tours from Fårösund on Gotland and Nynäshamn on the mainland.

www.gotskasandon.se

ÅLAND

Åland has 50 nature protection areas as well as 87 Natura 2000 areas. Åland also has a unique seal protection site. There are various types of nature such as deciduous and coniferous forest, bogs, marshes, bird islets and gravel islands in the nature protection areas on Åland. Many of the smaller protection areas are not designed for visits, though some of the larger nature protection areas such as Nåtö, Ramsholmen, Prästgårdsnäset and the nature protection area of Herrön are well-worth visiting.

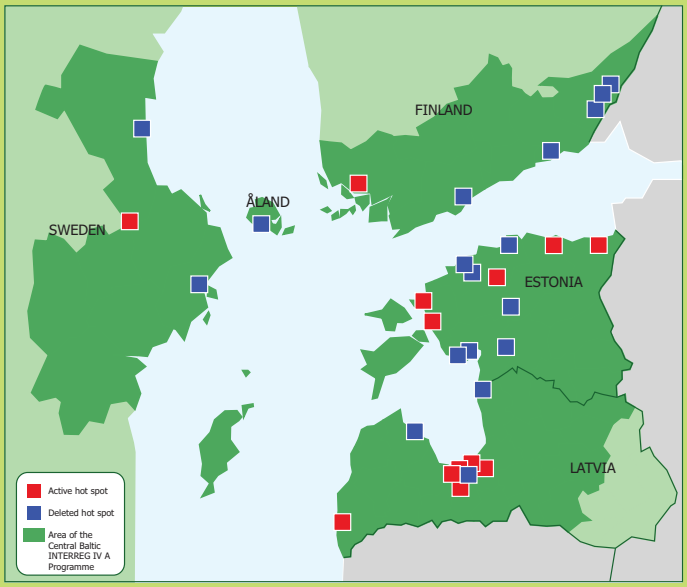
www.visitaland.com
www.regeringen.ax


Shores of Åland. Photo: Åland Tourist Board / Annica Jansson

HELCOM hot spots

The HELCOM hot spots are serious pollution areas within the Baltic Sea drainage that may harm the marine environment. They may also affect people's health and livelihoods. Over half of the 162 HELCOM hot spots identified around the Baltic Sea since 1992 have been deleted (statistics from June 2009). The most notorious hot spots are point sources, such as municipal facilities and industrial plants. However, the hot spots also cover pollution from agricultural areas and rural settlements, and sensitive areas such as coastal lagoons and wetlands, where special environmental measures are needed. A total of 87 of the 162 original hot spots and subsequent sub-hot spots have already been deleted from the list, and several more will soon be removed. In the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme geography, 13 HELCOM hotspots still exist. Projects aiming at alleviating the hot spots take precendence in the programme.

More information on the hotspots can be found at:
http://www.helcom.fi/projects/jcp/hotspots/en_GB/hotspots



BALTICSEANOW.INFO

Innovative participatory forum for the Baltic Sea

Emma and Johan walking the streets of Helsinki, Mariehamn, Riga, Stockholm or Tallinn can now get involved to save the Baltic Sea. On a new interactive web portal created in the project BalticSeaNow.info, Emma, Johan and others will have the possibilities to voice their views to protect the Baltic Sea environment.

The status of the Baltic Sea has changed dramatically during the last decades, and today it is mentioned as one of the most polluted seas in the world. Problems like eutrophication, alien species, and oil and chemical freighting represent the biggest threats. There is a common concern among the countries round the Baltic about the state and the future of the Baltic Sea. Several international efforts, actions and political steps have been taken to tackle the problem. However, citizens need to be involved to increase environmental awareness of the state of the Baltic Sea and of the actions needed to improve its ecological status.


Photos:Juha Kääriä

Modern communication methods and the know-how of the project partners representing environmental research, education and communication will be combined in the BalticSeaNow.Info project. The project idea is based on a three-step model where knowledge and sensitivity to the subject creates increased awareness, and this in turn leads to a desire to act for the better future of the Baltic Sea. The project establishes a common Baltic Sea web portal with a focus on interactive and participatory elements, organises events, produces educational materials, and analyses environmental attitudes.

Martti Komulainen, Project Manager for BalticSeaNow.info, says it is important to recognise that people make their own choices and that therefore it is not enough for institutions to plan and take measures. We need to involve the general public. It is also important to improve the dialogue between scientists and the public/decision-makers.

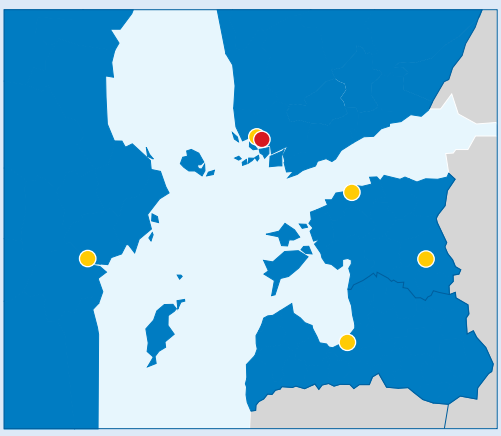
Martti Komulainen says that the next concrete milestone will be to launch the web portal in May 2010. The web portal will be built up during the project to include basic facts of the Baltic Sea, popularized scientific results and environmental information. Web cameras, online environmental information, social media channels, discussion groups, observations and stories produced by the public create a framework for joint discussion, information-sharing, the development of ideas, and participation. Martti Komulainen has a vision of a videoforum – a Baltic Sea Tube – in which people can develop their own ideas, stories and observations, etc. Experts from different fields would comment on the public discussions. Throughout the project, authorities and decision-makers will be informed about the new ideas emerging from the discussions.

BalticSeaNow.info - Innovative participatory forum for the Baltic Sea

(Sub-)programme: Central Baltic Programme
Priority: Safe and healthy environment
Direction of support: Environmental awareness raising and expertise
Project duration: November 2009 - October 2012 (3 years)

Approved budget: 1 281 735 euros
Approved ERDF: 1 006 207 euros

Lead partner: **Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku, Finland**
Partners: Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association, Turku, Finland
Tallinn University of Technology, Marine Systems Institute, Tallinn, Estonia
Estonian Fund for Nature, Tartu, Estonia
Environmental Projects Ltd., Riga, Latvia
The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, Norrköping, Sweden
More information: www.balticseanow.info (as of May 2010)



ACTIVE WETLANDS

ACTIVE measures on WETLANDS for decreasing nutrient load in the Baltic Sea

Estonian and Finnish farmers, rural advisors and decision-makers will learn more about how wetlands can be used to reduce the nutrient load from agriculture in the ACTIVE WETLANDS project. Simple and environmentally friendly methods will be introduced to increase the efficiency of agricultural wetlands.

Agriculture is an important sector in both Estonia and Finland. However, active uses of land, soil erosion, and nitrogen- and phosphorus-leaching have negative impact on the environment. These create problems like eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, erosion of arable land and inefficient use of valuable plant nutrients.

The ACTIVE WETLANDS project has identified possible solutions for how to reduce agricultural nutrient load by enhancing nutrient retention in the watersheds. Constructed wetlands are recognised as a powerful tool to reduce nutrient run-off from arable land to the Baltic Sea. Such wetlands preserve soil and nutrients from incoming water and increase biodiversity by creating plant and animal habitats different from neighbouring fields.

In Estonia and Finland, there is a demand for knowledge about the optimal wetland design, construction and, in particular, management. The land area available for constructed wetlands is often limited, meaning they cannot be made larger to increase retention efficiency. The project manager of Active Wetlands, Dr. Tapio Salo, says that if small wetlands instead can be made more efficient in their nutrient retention, they will reduce eutrophication of our surface waters and the Baltic Sea. Therefore, the project will promote small wetlands, but also educate people with respect to agricultural wetlands.

By establishing small pilot wetlands, the project will find practical designs and methods to increase nutrient retention efficiency of wetlands. The project will also test the potential of the pilot active wetlands with mathematical and economical models to estimate their cost-efficiency in retaining eutrifying nutrients originating from agriculture. Following the results, the project can suggest ways to include agricultural wetlands in the current agricultural policy.

The ACTIVE WETLANDS project will work with farmers, agricultural stakeholders, rural advisers and decision-makers. The partnership of the Active Wetlands project consists of six partners in Finland and Estonia with wide area of relevant expertise.

The project started at the beginning of November, and during the first phase of the project we will decide on pilot wetlands for detailed studies and carefully plan actions for spring 2010, says Dr. Tapio Salo.

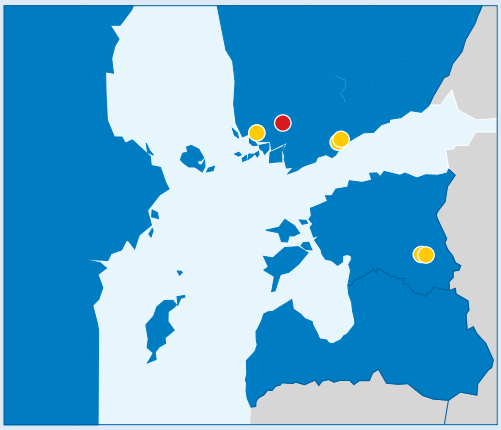
Photos:Aaro Närvänen, MTT

ACTIVE WETLANDS - ACTIVE measures on WETLANDS for decreasing nutrient load in the Baltic Sea

(Sub-)programme: Southern Finland - Estonia Sub-programme
Priority: Safe and healthy environment
Direction of support: Maintaining and improving the condition of the natural environment
Project duration: November 2009 - October 2012 (3 years)

Approved budget: 1 009 540 euros
Approved ERDF: 781 355 euros

Lead partner: **MTT Agrifood Research Finland, Jokioinen, Finland**
Partners: Finnish Environmental Institute (SYKE), Helsinki, Finland
WWF Finland, Helsinki, Finland
Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku, Finland
Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia
Estonian Fund for Nature, Tartu, Estonia
More information: www.wwf.fi/activewetlands (as of January 2010)



SEABED

Phosphorus from the seabed and water quality in archipelagos - modeling attempt

The state of the Baltic Sea is poor, despite extensive water protection measures taken to improve it. In the SEABED project, the internal phosphorus loading from sediments will be estimated by means of existing data and field studies. The information will be used to establish a sediment model to be included in an overall 3-D water quality model for the project area. The model framework will be used to run scenarios of water protection measures and environmental change.

In the Stockholm archipelago in Sweden and in the Archipelago Sea in Finland, poor oxygen conditions and "dead bottoms" exist in large areas. Poor oxygen conditions in near-bottom waters have also been observed in the Uusimaa archipelago, and similar conditions may prevail even in the Åland archipelago. Not only land-based and atmospheric nutrient loading but also phosphorus fluxes from the sediment to the water affect water quality. Rough estimations made in an earlier INTERREG IIIA financed project, "BEVIS", show that phosphorus fluxes from sediment may equal or even exceed the total phosphorus load from land sources.

Photos: Ari Linna

Scenario simulations are important tools for authorities, decision-makers and the general public, etc., to understand the impacts suggested measures may have on the Baltic Sea. Water quality models can be used to make such scenario simulations. However, as existing water quality models cannot adequately simulate phosphorus fluxes from sediment, the SEABED project aims to create a more comprehensive water quality model.

During field excursions, teams will collect sediment and water samples together with acoustic data from various sedimentary areas in Svealand, Åland, Southwest Finland and West Uusimaa archipelagos. The first excursions have now been made, but more data will be collected in 2010, says Ari Linna, Project Coordinator for SEABED. Once the data has been collected, it can be integrated into the water quality model. The final water quality model for the project area can simulate water quality changes caused not only by land-based or atmospheric nutrient loading, but also by phosphorus fluxes from sediment to water.

SEABED will also make use of the model to do scenarios of the effects of foreseen measures in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, the EU Water Framework Directive and the EU Marine Strategy. Furthermore, scenarios will be created for the effects of climate change and eco-engineering measures.

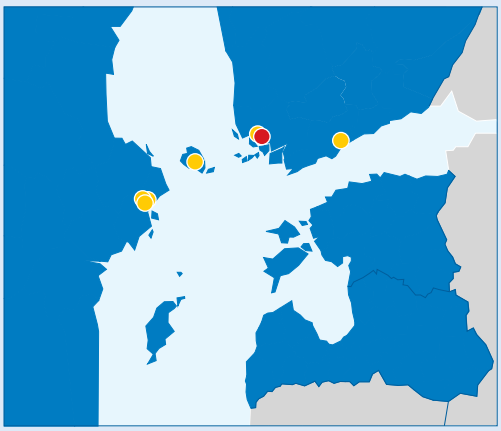
Ari Linna points out that the results of the scenario simulations can be used in water management plans in other Baltic coastal areas as well. He also mentions that everyone can make use of the model, as it will be uploaded on the web and will be available on CD.

SEABED - Phosphorus from the seabed and water quality in archipelagos - modeling attempt

(Sub-)programme: Archipelago and Islands Sub-programme
Priority: Safe and healthy environment
Direction of support: Raising environmental awareness (finding new ways)
Project duration: September 2009 - August 2012 (3 years)

Approved budget: 1 182 000 euros
Approved ERDF: 886 500 euros

Lead partner: **Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland**
Partners: Government of Åland, Mariehamn, Åland
Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre, Helsinki, Finland
Southwest Finland Regional Environment Centre, Turku, Finland
IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute Ltd., Stockholm, Sweden
Svealands Coastal Water Management Association, Stockholm, Sweden
Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
More information: www.abo.fi/huso/seabed (as of February 2010)



Previously presented:
1/5: REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FINLAND
2/5: ENTERPRISE ESTONIA

3/5: STATE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF LATVIA

Developing the regions

Māris Krastiņš
Director of the State Regional Development Agency

The Joint Technical Secretariat of the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme has five office locations (Turku, Mariehamn, Tallinn, Riga and Stockholm). Each office is hosted by a local organisation. The State Regional Development Agency of Latvia is the host organisation of the JTS Info Point Riga.

Let me introduce you to the State Regional Development Agency of Latvia! The Agency was founded in 2004 and is working in the field of regional development under the supervision of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government.

In five years, the Agency's initial main function of providing support to enterprises in specially supported areas has significantly expanded. Currently, one of the Agency's main functions is to administer earmarked subsidies, European Union funds and other financial instruments such as the Norwegian bilateral financial instrument and Swiss-Latvian cooperation programme. Our main beneficiaries within these support programmes are local governments and planning regions. On the basis of EU funds, the Agency is administering European Regional Development Fund activities aimed at infrastructure improvements in local municipalities and European Social Fund programmes providing support for capacity building.

Since its year of inception, the Agency has ensured the operation of the INTERREG Secretariat, and we are proud of the fact that it has now grown into the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes Riga Office. Aside from this, since 2007 we have also been ensuring the operation of the VASAB Secretariat. Another important function of the Agency is to perform the first level control over partners from Latvia involved in the projects financed by territorial cooperation programmes.

The Agency is looking after the implementation of e-governance through the development of the United Information System for Local Municipalities and is responsible for implementation of e-procurements and e-services, including maintenance of www.latvija.lv, where you can access central electronic services offered by state and municipal institutions.

To conclude, I wish to mention that the Agency pays special attention to informing stakeholders and the community by organizing informative and training seminars as well as carrying out thematic surveys on regional development.

Please visit our website www.vraa.gov.lv for a deeper view into our Agency's functions. We will be happy to establish new cooperation contacts, thereby expanding the horizons of our knowledge and the mutual benefits of cooperation.

Photo: www.li.lv - Juris Kalnins, FOTOCENTRS / The Latvian Institute

CALENDAR

CENTRAL BALTIC INTERREG IV A PROGRAMME 2007–2013

- From priorities to action seminar including partner search in Tallinn, Estonia, **March 2010**
- 4th AI Steering Committee meeting in Finland, **March 23-24, 2010**
  4th CB Steering Committee meeting in Latvia, **April 15-16, 2010**
  4th SFE Steering Committee meeting in Estonia, **April 20-21, 2010**
- Project Development seminars for 4th call applicants in all participating countries **during April 2010**
- 4th call for applications open **May 1-31, 2010**
- 5th Monitoring Committee meeting in Sweden, **May 2010**
- Lead Partner and Communication seminars in Helsinki, Finland, **May 2010**
- Project Development seminars for 5th call applicants in all participating countries **during September 2010**
- Second Showcase Conference of the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013 in Riga, Latvia, **September/October, 2010**
- 5th AI Steering Committee meeting in Finland, **October 12-13, 2010**
  5th SFE Steering Committee meeting in Estonia, **October 19-20, 2010**
  5th CB Steering Committee meeting in Latvia, **October 27-28, 2010**
- 5th call for proposals open **November 1-30, 2010**
- Lead Partner and Communication seminars in Tallinn, Estonia, **November 2010**
- 6th Monitoring Committee meeting in Sweden, **November 2010**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE @ www.centralbaltic.eu!

Almost 100.000 visits have already been paid to the programme website launched in February. On the site you'll find all the latest information, facts on the running projects, possibility to search partners for a project idea, various documents, an event calendar, contact details of the JTS and much more. You can also subscribe to the programme's email list online to always be among the first to receive the news from the programme!

CENTRAL BALTIC INTERREG IV A PROGRAMME IN A NUTSHELL

The Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013 is an EU funding programme aiming at co-operation across the borders of Estonia, Finland (incl. Åland), Sweden and Latvia. The programme gives funding to projects dealing with environment, competitiveness and innovation as well as the attractiveness of the societies.

Aiming at cross-border co-operation in the Central Baltic Sea region, the funded projects are to have partners from at least two of the participating countries. The duration of the projects is normally 2-3 years and the approximate average budget around 1 million euros. The potential partners include local and regional authorities, state organisations and organisations established for general interest needs as well as NGOs and for Southern Finland – Estonia co-operation private enterprises with certain restrictions. For more detailed definitions see the Programme manual available on the programme's website.

More information about the programme and how to apply for funding can be found at www.centralbaltic.eu as well as by contacting the Joint Technical Secretariat with its offices in Turku, Mariehamn, Tallinn, Riga and Stockholm. Contact information can be found on the website.

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