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ECA Special Report 03/2016 Combating the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea

CONT Workshop

Dr Vivi Niemenmaa



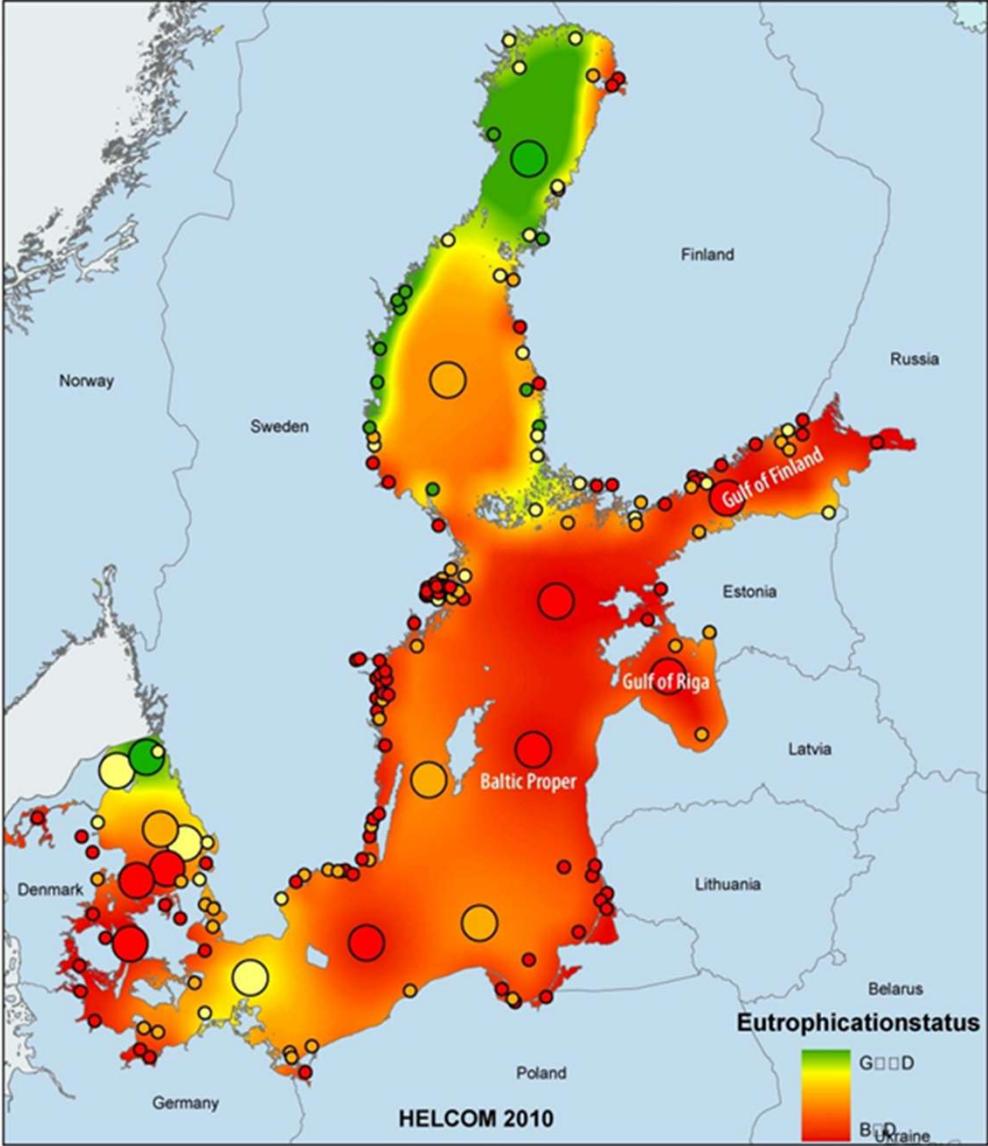
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OF AUDITORS

Eutrophication caused by excess input of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus)



Source: Helcom, photo by Samuli Korpinen.

Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea



Main nutrient pollution sources

- Agriculture – diffuse pollution
- Waste water treatment – point sources

Relevant Directives

- The 1991 Nitrates Directive
- The 1991 Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
- The 2000 Water Framework Directive
- The 2008 Marine Strategy Framework Directive

The main audit question:

Have the EU actions been effective in helping Member States to reduce nutrient loads into the Baltic Sea?

The overall conclusion:

These actions have led only to limited progress towards nutrient reduction in the Baltic Sea.

Agriculture

9.9 billion direct/indirect EAFRD support in 8 Baltic Sea Member States in 2007-2013

- Shortcomings in the designation of nitrate vulnerable zones
- Nitrate action programmes are not always strict enough
- Rural development measures are not targeted to areas in need
- Good news: improvements noted for the 2014-2020 period

Urban wastewater collection and treatment

4.6 billion ERDF and Cohesion Funds in 5 Baltic Sea Member States (2007-2013)

- Only 2 Member States fully compliant with the Directive
- Poland: huge investments but compliance still far
- The Commission's assessment of the Directive's implementation late
- Good news: treatment plants audited effective (LV, PL)
But no guarantee of sustainability and some over-sized

Russia and Belarus

44 million via NDEP grants in 2001-2014

- Around 10 % of nitrogen and 20 % of phosphorus from Russia
- EU contribution to investments very limited
- Good news: St. Petersburg waste water treated

But projects take a long time to be completed (e.g. Kaliningrad), and their number is limited even though they are cost-effective

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

- Initiated by the European Parliament and adopted by the European Council in 2009
- Built on three “NOs”: no new funding, no new legislation and no new institutions
- Good elements:
 - Some flagship projects have helped to distribute good practises
 - The link between the Strategy and Cohesion Policy programmes has reinforced
 - But its added value in relation to reduction of nutrient inputs is difficult to assess.

Recommendations

Programmes of measures should identify:

- Cost-effective measures
- Measurable nutrient reduction targets

Agricultural measures should be targeted to most risky areas by:

- Designating appropriate nitrate vulnerable zones
- Targetting the agri-environmental measures

Increase the effectiveness in waste water sector by:

- Assessing faster the compliance and reaching beyond the Directive ambition
- Planning waste water treatment infrastructure efficiently

Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?

