



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Foreign Affairs

2009/2230(INI)

8.4.2010

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Regional Development

European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the role of macro-
regions in the future cohesion policy
(2009/2230(INI))

Rapporteur: Adam Bielan

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Is convinced that the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the accompanying action plans proposed by the Commission will be more successful if constructive and balanced cooperation takes place with external partners in the region, including Russia, Norway, Belarus and inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies;
2. Reiterates the Council conclusions of 28 September 2009¹ adopting the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which note that this is an internal EU strategy and that external aspects of cooperation will be addressed within the Northern Dimension framework, as also stated in the European Parliament's initial resolution of November 2006; underlines, in this context, the importance of close sectoral cooperation with Norway, Belarus and in particular Russia, the only non-EU country with direct access to the Baltic Sea, especially with regard to infrastructures, maritime transport security, water management and quality and eutrophication, but emphasises that this should not entail the creation of any additional bureaucratic structures; specifically notes the status of the Kaliningrad Oblast enclave, which is surrounded by EU Member States; emphasises the need to stimulate social and economic development in this region, as a 'gateway' or 'pilot' region for a closer EU-Russia relationship involving NGOs, educational and cultural institutions and local and regional authorities;
3. Believes that the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia should take account of the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area; welcomes the efforts by the Commission and the Member States in the region to cooperate with Russia on a vast number of areas, such as transport connections, tourism, cross-border health threats, environmental protection and adaptation to climate change, the environment, customs and border controls and, in particular, energy issues; believes that the EU-Russia common spaces will provide a valuable framework in this regard, and calls on Russia to play an equal part in such cooperation; stresses that progress by Russia with regard to the rule of law would do a great deal to deepen EU-Russia relations;
4. Underlines the importance of the region for Europe's energy security and calls for the development of EU projects aimed at improving energy links between Member States in the area;
5. Stresses the need to reduce the region's dependence on Russian energy; welcomes the European Commission's statement on the need for more interconnections between Member States in the region and greater diversification of energy supplies; calls in this regard for increased support for the creation of LNG ports;
6. Calls for special respect for environmental protection in the context of implementing the Nord Stream Project; calls on the Commission to report back to the European Parliament,

¹ Doc. 13744/09.

in line with the latter's resolution of 8 July 2008¹, as to whether the national environmental impact assessments of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea have been carried out in full compliance with international environmental law;

7. Is deeply concerned about the recent joint military manoeuvres by Belarus and Russia, allegedly aimed at – among other things – the defence of the Nord Stream Pipeline; voices its strong opposition to using the Nord Stream project as an excuse for a strengthened Russian military presence in the Baltic Sea;
8. Welcomes the amount of EUR 20 million earmarked in the 2010 EU budget for the Baltic Sea Strategy; notes that it is additional to other funds such as structural funds, and that as part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument it can be used only for external action, which effectively means cooperation with Russia and Belarus; calls for future funds allocated to the Baltic Sea Strategy to be moved to Chapter 1 of the EU budget so that they can also be made available to the coordinators and lead partners of the Baltic Sea Strategy, particularly in the context of achieving sustainability goals, and asks that the possibility of finding additional financial resources, notably through the European Investment Bank and the Nordic Investment Bank, not be ruled out;
9. Notes the deep impact the global financial and economic crisis has had on all countries in the region, in particular the Baltic states; calls on all stakeholders not to weaken their commitment to the EU Baltic Sea Strategy because of the crisis;
10. Regrets, however, that the funds earmarked for the Baltic Sea Strategy have not yet been disbursed by the Commission; reminds the Commission, therefore, of the importance of ensuring that the funds are disbursed and used in line with the European Parliament's requests;
11. Underlines the sensitivity of the region owing to its strategic position; stresses that improved relations with external partners in the Baltic Sea Region will benefit the whole EU;
12. Is convinced that the success of any EU policy such as the Baltic Sea Strategy will be measured in terms of practical results, which must be visible and tangible for citizens, and that, given the severity of the environmental, infrastructure-related and other challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region, greater involvement of organised civil society is critical;
13. Reiterates, in this regard, that in order to make cross-border projects more effective, Russia should swiftly incorporate international best practice on transparency and public accountability into its national legislation and ratify the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context;

¹ OJ C 294 E, 3.12.2009, p. 3.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	8.4.2010
Result of final vote	+: 42 -: 0 0: 10
Members present for the final vote	Gabriele Albertini, Elmar Brok, Mário David, Marietta Giannakou, Anna Ibrisagic, Jelko Kacin, Ioannis Kasoulides, Tunne Kelam, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Maria Eleni Koppa, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Krzysztof Lisek, Ulrike Lunacek, Mario Mauro, Kyriakos Mavronikolas, Francisco José Millán Mon, Alexander Mirsky, Andreas Mölzer, Raimon Obiols, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Bernd Posselt, Cristian Dan Preda, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Werner Schulz, Adrian Severin, Marek Siwiec, Ernst Strasser, Hannes Swoboda, Charles Tannock, Inese Vaidere, Kristian Vigenin
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Laima Liucija Andrikiienė, Elena Băsescu, Adam Bielan, Diogo Feio, Elisabeth Jeggle, Metin Kazak, Evgeni Kirilov, Norbert Neuser, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Vittorio Prodi, Marietje Schaake, György Schöpflin, Traian Ungureanu
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Marije Cornelissen, Franziska Keller, Marek Henryk Migalski, Michail Tremopoulos