REPORT

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

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Wojciech Michał Olejniczak
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy in the Baltic Sea Region (COM(2009)0248) and the indicative action plan accompanying the Strategy,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region adopted on 26 October 2009,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2008 on the environmental impact of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea to link up Russia and Germany\(^1\),
- having regard to its resolution of 16 November 2006 on a Baltic Sea Strategy for the Northern Dimension\(^2\),
- having regard to the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee on the communication from the Commission concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (ECO/261) and on ‘Macro-regional cooperation – Rolling out the Baltic Sea Strategy to other macro-regions in Europe’ (ECO/251),
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The role of local and regional authorities within the new Baltic Sea Strategy’ of 21-22 April 2009,
- having regard to the Committee of the Regions’ own-initiative opinion ‘The Committee of the Regions’ White Paper on Multilevel Governance’ (CdR 89/2009 fin),
- having regard to Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A7-0202/2010),

A. whereas, since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, the Baltic Sea has become the EU’s internal sea, which unites countries but also presents its own challenge, and whereas the countries of the Baltic Sea Region demonstrate interdependence and share the same problems,

B. whereas, the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a pilot for future macro-regional strategies, and the Strategy’s success can be a model for the way in which future strategies can be implemented,

C. whereas the idea of creating functional regions, focused around joint objectives and development problems, can lead to an increase in the effectiveness of EU regional policy,

D. whereas in order to increase the effectiveness of regional policy, in particular in terms of its post-2013 reform, the idea of an integrated approach should be supported and developed, together with the creation of strategies for macro-regions that are strategies for the whole of the European Union, the implementation of which must not, however, lead to the renationalisation of cohesion policy,

E. whereas the Baltic Sea remains the most polluted sea in the European Union, and its environmental status should not worsen because of the implementation of the large-scale infrastructure projects in and around the Baltic Sea (including non-EU countries),

1. Welcomes the approval of the European Commission and the support of the Council for the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which Parliament has been calling for since 2006;

2. Welcomes, in particular, the fact that the Strategy is the result of broad consultation with interested parties in the Member States, including not only national, regional and local authorities but also the academic and business communities as well as NGOs, showing that the consultation process and the inclusion of partners from the very beginning of work on the Strategy is an important factor in its success; in this regard welcomes the establishment of a civil society forum in the region such as the Baltic Sea Action Summit and calls for similar initiatives for future macro-regions that bring together public and private actors, enabling them to become involved in the development of macro-regional strategies;

3. Recommends, in this context, increasing the local communities’ involvement by setting up wider and more focused communication and consultation tools, including through the local media (local television, radio and printed and online newspapers); calls on the Commission to create a special web portal devoted to the Baltic Sea Strategy, which would act as a forum for the exchange of experiences regarding current and future projects undertaken by central and local governments, NGOs and other entities active in the Baltic Sea Region;

4. Welcomes the EU2020 Strategy, which is consistent with the goals set on the Baltic Sea Strategy and notes that EU2020 can act as an efficient framework for the implementation and strengthening of the Baltic Sea Strategy;

5. Believes that the establishment as part of the Strategy of a new framework for cooperation based on an integrated approach opens up the possibility for more rational and effective use of the financial resources available for environmental protection and the development of the Baltic Sea Region both from EU and national funds and from various financial institutions;

6. Draws attention to the disproportion in terms of economic development and innovation that exists in the Baltic Sea Region and the necessity to increase the potential of all areas, including the highly developed ones, as they can help in pulling forward the least advantaged regions; points out the need to promote new areas with development and innovation potential and to take the opportunity of using the added value of the Baltic Sea Strategy and other future macro-regional strategies to reach new level of synergy which can reduce existing disparities, in order to create a permanent area of common prosperity with a high level of competitiveness, which is crucial in the face of an aging population and new patterns in globalisation;
7. Emphasises that the prompt and consistent implementation of existing EU legal acts designed to strengthen the internal market, such as the Services Directive, is necessary to increase the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region as an economic area;

8. Calls on the Member States and regions to take advantage of the Structural Funds available for 2007-2013 in order to ensure maximum support for the Strategy, in particular to promote job creation and economic growth in areas most affected by the economic crisis, and, at the same time, recommends, where justified, making provision for changes to the Operational Programmes in the current programming period; highlights that exploiting the particular characteristics of regions could lead to much more effective use of the Structural Funds and the creation of added value at regional level;

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. Considers that all actions regarding sector policies with a territorial dimension are of key importance to the Strategy’s success and the achievement of the ambitious goals of further macro-regional strategies, including the common agricultural policy, fisheries policy, transport policy, industrial policy, research policy, and a coherent infrastructure policy, as well as combining available funds intended for jointly defined goals in a given area; in this context a policy review should be carried out with regard to these new challenges, an appropriate framework should be put in place at EU level and it should be determined how this framework should relate to existing national and local structures;

11. Believes that the Strategy’s territorial dimension will lead to the concrete development of the idea of territorial cohesion, which the Treaty of Lisbon places on an equal footing with economic and social cohesion, and with this in mind calls on the Commission to engage in active dialogue on the role and impact of EU macro-regional policies after 2013;

12. Encourages the development of specific provisions with the forthcoming general regulation on Structural Funds on the basis of territorial cooperation provisions that are clear, and take into account the different administrative culture and do not impose extra administrative burdens on the beneficiaries, in order to strengthen the cooperation between countries and regions, and the development of further joint action strategies which may enhance the region’s attractiveness at the European and international levels and may subsequently constitute a model for cross-border cooperation;

13. Draws attention to the fact that the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should be seen as a process in which the principle of action and cooperation is constantly developed, making it necessary to update the strategy, and that the overriding goal is to find optimal mechanisms that can be transferred to future macro-regional strategies; underlines, in this respect, the importance of collecting, summarising, and promoting successful initiatives and their results; supports the Commission’s plan to create a best practices database with a view to using these practices to develop future macro-regional strategies;

14. Considers that territorial cooperation developed as part of a strategy for macro-regions can lead to a significant strengthening of the integration process through the greater involvement of civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of concrete actions; in this context the implementation particularly of social, economic, cultural, educational and tourism elements is recommended for macro-regional strategies, and, in order to strengthen local civil society participation and subsidiarity, also considers...
it important to promote macro-regional strategies by setting up EGTCs;

15. Emphasises the importance of promoting the development of culture, education and research and innovation as well as encouraging the Member States to enter into close cooperation particularly in the last-named area; recognises that in the area of education cooperation can certainly be highly beneficial, but that competence should remain with the Member States; recommends the strengthening of the strategic approach and long-term planning in respect of macro-regions;

16. Guided by the principle of subsidiarity, and seeing the enormous potential for cooperation at local and regional level, underlines the considerable importance of creating an effective, multilevel structure for cooperation through the promotion of sectoral partnerships involving regular meetings of the policy-makers responsible, which will strengthen the responsibility shared between the various partner entities while safeguarding the organisational sovereignty of the Member States and regions; in this respect, calls for the cross-border cooperation mechanisms established at local and regional level to be improved, developed and strengthened;

17. Stresses the fact that the new ‘macro-regional’ framework of cooperation has a strong ‘top-down’ approach, with the Member States having a decisive role in its development, and creates a new level of governance; in the framework of this new model of cooperation it has to be ensured that the natural handicaps of the peripheral regions are converted into assets and opportunities, and that the development of these regions is stimulated’;

18. Considers that macro-regions combine the potential to optimise the response to the challenges appearing in a given region; with that of using the particular opportunities and resources of each region in an effective and efficient way;

19. Calls on the European Commission to analyse the first results and experiences in connection with the implementation of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which will help to map out possible sources and methods for financing macro-regional strategies and help in using the example of the Strategy as a pilot project for other macro-regional strategies to demonstrate their functionality; stresses however that the development of macro-regions is essentially of a complementary nature and should not aim to replace EU financing of individual local and regional programmes as a funding priority;

20. Notes that implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy has as yet been very slow; considers that the appropriations earmarked in the 2010 EU budget may be used to improve implementation; regrets, therefore, that these appropriations have still not been disbursed and reminds the Commission of the importance of this money being allocated as soon as possible for purposes in line with the targets of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

21. Draws attention, for the benefit of possible future macro-regional strategies, to the need for the European Commission to resolve the issue of its own resources in order to be able to anticipate such strategies on the basis of the territorial specificities of the regions concerned, providing the participating Member States with fresh ideas concerning topics of European interest and supporting them in drawing up a strategy; calls on the European Commission to supervise the implementation of these strategies by acting as a coordinator, rethinking new priorities and devoting resources according to specialised needs and expertise requirements, while avoiding duplication of work;
22. Calls on the European Commission, in the context of the need to carry out an interim analysis of the implementation of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, to prepare concrete instruments and criteria for evaluating projects based on indicators that allow comparisons to be made;

23. Calls on the European Commission, the Member States and its own members to find answers to the questions concerning the nature of macro-regional policies and how they could be treated equally (separately or as part of cohesion policy), who should implement them and how, and with what sources of funding they should be financed in order not to create unnecessary multiplication and fragmentation of EU funding, in particular in the context of the EU2020 Strategy, the EU budget review and the debate on the future cohesion policy;

24. Emphasises that the European added value of macro-regions lies in greater cooperation between states and regions, which is why the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation represents an important element in implementing the macro-regions’ aims; furthermore proposes that the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should be regarded as a European Union strategy, based upon several EU policies, which should have a defined time frame and goals; given its horizontal nature, the strategy could be treated as macro-regional and its coordination brought under regional policy.

25. Believes that the development of large-scale strategies, such as macro-regional strategies, should contribute to enhancing the role of the local and regional level in the implementation of EU policy more generally;

**External dimension**

26. Calls for improvement, in the context of the Strategy for Baltic Sea Region as well as of the future macro-regional strategies, of the relations between the European Union and the non-EU states, particularly in the implementation of large-scale projects with significant environmental impact; furthermore, calls for cooperation between the EU and non-EU states to strengthen security within the region and support the fight against cross-border crime.

27. Draws attention to the need to seek greater cooperation particularly between Russia and Belarus, and the Baltic States when constructing the energy network, and to take greater advantage of the energy dialogue between the EU and Russia for this purpose, which would at the same time open up opportunities for involving Russia in the Baltic Sea Strategy; expects all actors around the Baltic Sea to join international agreements such as the Espoo Convention and the Helsinki Convention, comply with the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) guidelines, and cooperate within this framework;

28. Calls on the Commission to ensure effective cooperation and coordination with HELCOM and the Member States of the Baltic Sea Region, in order to secure a clear delineation of tasks and responsibilities as regards the implementation of the 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the above-mentioned EU Strategy and Action Plan, and thus to ensure an effective overall strategy for the Region;

29. 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;

30. 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;

31. 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;

32. Believes that in order to achieve an effective protection of the environment and of biodiversity, agreements should be reached with the non-EU states that are part of the functional areas interested by the strategies, so that they can share the same values, rights and duties contained in the relevant European Union legislation;

33. Considers that Baltic Sea Region Cooperation should be prioritised and should take place at the highest political level of Heads of State and Government, since it is crucial in driving forward cooperation between the Baltic Sea countries and ensuring that political ambitions are realised; looks to see regular meetings between the Heads of State and Government in the Baltic Sea region seeking to achieve this;

**Environmental and energy aspects**

34. Emphasises the need for an environmental impact assessment of energy infrastructure projects (currently under construction and in the future), taking into account, in particular international conventions; calls on the Commission to design an adequate reaction plan for technical accidents and any other possible catastrophes, providing also for ways of dealing with these events from an economic point of view; underlines that the same approach must be taken for any future project, so that the security of countries around the Baltic Sea involved in other future macro-regional strategies, environment and shipping conditions is not endangered; considers it is in the interests of sustainable development and green growth to achieve strong environmental protection in all macro-regions, as well as equal consideration for environmental protection, travel and other aspects;

35. Emphasises the need to establish a Baltic Sea Environmental Monitoring Centre, an early-warning system for accidents and serious cross-border pollution, and a joint action force to deal with such situations;

36. Draws attention to the strategic significance of the Baltic Sea region for the development of joint projects on energy infrastructure that improve diversification of energy production and supply, with a special emphasis on renewable energy projects such as
wind farms (onshore or offshore), geothermal energy or biogas plants using biofuels available in the region;

37. Draws attention to the effective cooperation already achieved in the energy and climate sector between the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council in the context of the Northern Dimension;

38. Emphasises that, in view of the intended expansion of nuclear energy in the Baltic Sea region, EU countries have to follow the strictest safety and environmental standards and the European Commission has to watch and monitor whether the same approach and international conventions are followed in the neighbouring countries, especially in those which are planning to build nuclear power plants near external EU borders;

39. Emphasises the need for the EU and its Member States surrounding the Baltic Sea Region urgently to address the serious environmental problems affecting the Region, principal among which are eutrophication, the impact of hazardous substances deposited on the seabed and threats to aquatic biodiversity, with particular regard to endangered fish populations; recalls that the Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted sea areas in the world;

40. Emphasises the need to introduce a method common to all Member States for drawing up an inventory of sources of pollution and a plan for their gradual elimination;

41. Welcomes the inclusion of environmental sustainability as a central pillar in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the accompanying action plan;

42. Considers that one of the most serious obstacles to realising the objectives of the Baltic Sea Strategy is the lack of consistency with other policy areas within the EU such as the CAP which exacerbates eutrophication, and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which is not environmentally sustainable; considers that reforms to the CAP and the CFP must be made in such a way that they contribute to achieving the objective of an environmentally sustainable Baltic Sea area;

**Transport and tourism aspects**

43. Emphasises that it is a priority to create an effective and environmentally friendly sea, land and inland transport and communication network (with the sea network giving a prominent role to the transport of goods) that can anticipate and respond in a timely fashion to current and future challenges, taking account of the provisions of the updated version of the Natura 2000 document and paying particular attention to links between the Baltic Sea region and other European regions through the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor and the Central European Transport Corridor;

44. Considers enhanced connections, involving all modes of transport, to represent an essential contribution to the development of a stronger, more cohesive economy in the Baltic Sea Region;

45. Stresses the specific situation of the Baltic States, which to a large extent are currently isolated from the European transport network, and takes the view that this strategy should, inter alia, help to address the lack of appropriate infrastructure and accessibility, as well as low interoperability between various national transport networks owing to different technical systems and administrative barriers, in order to develop a comprehensive multimodal transport system across the Baltic Sea Region;
46. Emphasises the importance of integrating the Baltic Sea Region more closely into the TEN-T priority axes, in particular with regard to the Motorways of the Sea (TEN-T 21), extending the rail axis from Berlin to the Baltic coast (TEN-T 1), improving the rail axis from Berlin to the Baltic coast in combination with the Rostock-Denmark Seaway connection, and making more rapid progress in upgrading and using the Rail Baltica axis (TEN-T 27); also emphasises the need to complete the interconnections between the Baltic Sea Region and other European regions via the Baltic-Adriatic corridor;

47. Stresses that it is important to enhance the Baltic Sea Region’s transport capacity towards the east, in particular in order to promote transport interoperability, especially for railways, and to speed up freight transit at the borders of the European Union;

48. Believes that particular priority should be given to connections between harbours and inland regions, including by means of inland waterways, so as to ensure that all parts of the region can benefit from the growth of maritime cargo transport;

49. Stresses, in this regard, the need for effective cross-border coordination and cooperation between rail, sea ports, inland ports, hinterland terminals and logistics in order to develop a more sustainable intermodal transport system;

50. Underlines the importance of short sea shipping in the Baltic Sea and its contribution to an efficient, environmentally-friendly transport network; points out that the competitiveness of short sea shipping links must be promoted in order to ensure efficient use of the sea; believes for this reason that the Commission needs to provide the European Parliament, as quickly as possible, but by the end of 2010 at the latest, with an impact assessment of the effects of the revised Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention, limiting sulphur in marine fuel oil to 0.1% from 2015 in the areas of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea where sulphur emissions are being monitored;

51. Welcomes the inclusion in the Commission’s action plan of the objective of making the Baltic Sea a model region for clean shipping and a world leader in maritime safety and security; considers these objectives to be crucial to maintaining and enhancing the region’s potential for tourism;

52. Recognises the need for specific measures in support of this objective, including the appropriate use of nautical pilots or demonstrably experienced seafarers for the most challenging straits and ports and the establishment of reliable financing schemes for research and development on the sustainable operation of ships;

53. Recognises that the geographical location of the Baltic Sea Region is exceptional, and that such a location provides opportunities to more actively develop ties with the EU and neighbouring external countries, and also stresses the importance of tourism to the regional economy and the scope for expansion; welcomes the declaration adopted at the 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, which referred to common promotional activities, efforts to find new international markets and infrastructure development;

54. Underlines the unique opportunity for sustainable tourism offered by the attractiveness of the Hanseatic cities in the Baltic Region; supports, furthermore, the promotion of cross-border cycle tourism, thereby creating win-win effects for the environment and for small and medium-sized enterprises;

55. Considers themes such as water sports, wellness and spa tourism, the cultural heritage and landscapes to offer great potential for developing the region’s profile as a tourist
destination; stresses, therefore, the need to protect natural coastal areas, landscapes and
the cultural heritage as a resource for ensuring a sustainable economy in the Baltic Sea
Region in the future;

56. Regards improvements in transport links and the elimination of bottlenecks to be of no
less importance, and notes that border-crossing difficulties at checkpoints on the EU’s
eastern border with the Russian Federation, which cause long queues of lorries and pose
threats to the environment, social harmony, traffic safety and drivers’ safety, could be
solved via this strategy in order to ensure the smooth flow of goods through the Baltic
Sea Region;

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57. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, national
parliaments, and the governments of the Russian Federation, Belarus and Norway.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The problems arising in this age of globalisation, rapid climatic and demographic change and increased economic competition often transcend administrative or political borders.

Thus we are faced with the need to develop specific responses to such challenges and the way existing political and financial instruments are applied to them.

This is the context which gave rise to the concept of the macro-region, a functional space concentrated on common development goals or problems and possessing certain common features and geographical determinants.

The Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is the first, and so far the only, attempt to create a complex common development strategy for a macro-region of this type.

According to the Communication from the European Commission, 'the Baltic Sea Region is a highly heterogeneous area in economic, environmental and cultural terms, yet the countries concerned share many common resources and demonstrate considerable interdependence.' That interdependence, along with the need to confront similar challenges, is the justification for joint action within the framework of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The Strategy was adopted after wide consultation with interested parties in the Member States, including not only public authorities but also academic and business circles and NGOs. The consultation process and the involvement of partners from the very beginning of work on the strategy must be considered a success in itself. The work gave rise to a proposal for a new form of cooperation within the European Union. The regions of eight EU Member States, as well as those of states outside the Union, with close on 100 million inhabitants, are now able to plan, set priorities and implement action in pursuit of common goals, with the overall aim of ensuring effective protection of the environment and harmonious economic and social development.

The four pillars of the Strategy, aimed at making better use of Community programmes and national policies, are as follows:

- protection of the environment,
- enhancing the region’s prosperity,
- increasing accessibility and attractiveness, and
- ensuring safety and security in the region.

The Strategy is further divided into 15 priority areas and over 70 flagship projects.

It takes as its starting point the projects and initiatives already existing in the region, whether developed by the EU or implemented in direct cooperation between Member States in the Baltic Sea region, and places them in a new cooperative framework based on an integrated policy.

The undoubted condition for the success of a strategy defined in this way is coordination of the activities pursued under all policies having a territorial impact. Optimum results are

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3 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (COM(2009)248 final, 10 June 2009).
possible only if activities and available resources are linked and directed towards jointly
defined goals in a given area. Efforts to deal with challenges such as climate change can be
effective only if we take into account other policies that directly affect them (e.g. fisheries
policy and the common agricultural policy).

The Strategy is also predicated on strengthened cooperation with neighbouring countries not
belonging to the Union whose territories are part of functional spaces defined by the given
macro-region or affect those spaces indirectly. For example, in striving to ensure the
cleanliness of the waters of the Baltic Sea, we cannot ignore the fact that the rivers of certain
states flow into it even though the states in question have no direct access to the Sea.

The main challenge in implementing the Strategy for the BSR is to create sound structures for
cooperation and coordination and an efficient management system.

The EC is nevertheless to constitute the strategic centre for the complex supervision of
implementation, despite fears that it does not possess sufficient financial or human resources
at this time to supervise implementation of the Strategy efficiently.

Responsibility for the actual implementation of the Strategy is to lie with the Member States,
in which respect the creation of new organisational or administrative structures does not seem
necessary or likely to contribute to efficient implementation.

Such an approach clearly requires an additional organisational effort and wide-ranging
cooperation between institutions, organisations and partners in the framework of individual
policies at EU, national, regional and local level, in accordance with the principle of
multilevel governance recommended by the Committee of the Regions.\footnote{Own-initiative opinion of the Committee of the Regions: White Paper on Multilevel Governance, CdR 89/2009 final.}

In line with this principle, implementation of projects in the framework of the Strategy will be
the task of regional authorities, NGOs and citizens’ associations, which best know their own
situation and possibilities, and it is on their efforts that the success of the Strategy will
depend.

Furthermore, if the idea of an integrated approach is not to remain an empty slogan, and the
Strategy is not to be simply a collection of separate projects but a creator of added value,
practical evaluation criteria must be established on the basis of a set of indicators that permit
comparability. It is important that the report on implementation of the Strategy announced for
2011 give a true picture of the achievements and difficulties, so as to enable any necessary
amendments and improvements to be made and the Strategy to be given new impetus for the
future.

We need to think about possibilities for exploiting our experience in implementing the
Strategy, and specifically about whether it represents a desirable direction for future cohesion
policy and is the right way to develop cooperation within the European Union. Is the creation
of macro-regions – functional regions made up of groups of regions concentrating on common
development goals or problems and possessing similar characteristics and geographical
determinants – an efficient approach to the challenges of future cohesion policy?
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

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 2009 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,

5 Doc. 13744/09.
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, in line with the latter’s resolution of 8 July 2008, 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

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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;
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>8.4.2010</th>
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</thead>
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| 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 Andrikienė, 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 |
7.4.2010

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Regional Development

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

Rapporteur: Anna Rosbach

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Emphasises the need for the EU and its Member States surrounding the Baltic Sea Region, urgently to address the serious environmental problems affecting the Region, principal among which are eutrophication, the impact of hazardous substances deposited on the seabed and threats to aquatic biodiversity, with particular regard to endangered fish populations; recalls that the Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted sea areas in the world;

2. Emphasises the need to identify the size and location of the toxic military gases dumped during World War II, together with plans for their disposal, and to assess the risk from projects on the Baltic seabed;

3. Emphasises the need to introduce a method common to all Member States for drawing up an inventory of sources of pollution and a plan for their gradual elimination;

4. Welcomes the inclusion of environmental sustainability as a central pillar in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the accompanying Action Plan;

5. Considers however, that despite the Strategy’s focus on the marine environment, projects under the Action Plan should also tackle and properly prioritise environmental issues affecting inland areas of the Region; calls, therefore, for centuries-old coastal communities engaged in traditional maritime activities to be protected and supported and
for the coastal landscape and natural assets to be respected by, inter alia, introducing sustainable land-use plans and preventing excessive exploitation for tourism purposes;

6. Notes that nutrient loads from agriculture account to a great extent for the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea; insists therefore that as part of the Action Plan the Commission and Member States introduce measures that go beyond the rules currently contained in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in order significantly to reduce nutrient loads;

7. Considers that one of the most serious obstacles to realising the objectives of the Baltic Sea Strategy is the lack of consistency with other policy areas within the EU such as the CAP which exacerbates eutrophication, and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which is not environmentally sustainable; considers that reforms to the CAP and the CFP must be made in such a way that they contribute to achieving the objective of an environmentally sustainable Baltic Sea area;

8. Emphasises that that the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline is the most strategically significant project in the Region at present and will have far-reaching effects on its environment; thus regrets that the above-mentioned Strategy and Action Plan fail to deal specifically with the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline and other similar projects and their environmental consequences;

9. Highlights the need for close cooperation among the countries of the Baltic Sea region, in accordance with the Espoo Convention, the Helsinki Convention and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) guidelines, in connection with projects which may have a radical impact on the quality of the region’s environment;

10. Calls therefore, on the Commission and Member States urgently to take steps, in line with Parliament’s position set out in its resolution of 8 July 2008 on the environmental impact of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea to link up Russia and Germany\(^7\), to ensure that projects under the Action Plan properly assess and mitigate the negative environmental effects of the gas pipeline scheme; also considers that Nord Stream itself must be responsible for financing the measures needed to ensure that the Baltic Sea environment is not harmed as a result of the construction of the gas pipeline; calls, at the same time, for projects which are unnecessary because they can be carried out on land to be avoided in future;

11. Considers that a ban on phosphates from detergents should be introduced as soon as possible throughout the EU; notes that such a measure could bring clear environmental benefits to the Baltic Sea and other areas;

12. Stresses that environmental issues must be fully considered and incorporated into any similar approach or Strategy which is applied and developed in future in other macro-regions of the EU – such as the Danube, Alpine or Mediterranean;

13. Calls on the Commission to ensure effective cooperation and coordination with HELCOM and the Member States of the Baltic Sea Region, in order to secure a clear delineation of tasks and responsibilities as regards the implementation of the 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea

\(^7\) OJ C 294E, 3.12.2009, p. 3.
Action Plan and the above-mentioned EU Strategy and Action Plan, and thus to ensure an effective overall strategy for the Region;

14. Considers that Baltic Sea Region Cooperation should be prioritised and should take place at the highest political level of Heads of State and Government, since it is crucial in driving forward cooperation between the Baltic Sea countries and ensuring that political ambitions are realised; looks to see regular meetings between the Heads of State and Government in the Baltic Sea region seeking to achieve this;

15. Welcomes the creation of a separate budget line for the Baltic Sea Strategy in the EU budget; also welcomes the EUR 20 million earmarked for the Strategy in the 2010 budget; calls, however, for longer-term funding of the Strategy within the framework of the EU budget so as to finance measures which are not covered by the Structural Funds;

16. Notes that implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy has as yet been very slow; considers that the appropriations earmarked in the 2010 EU budget may be used to improve implementation; regrets, therefore, that these appropriations have still not been disbursed and reminds the Commission of the importance of this money being allocated as soon as possible for purposes in line with the targets of the Baltic Sea Strategy.
## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<tr>
<th>Date adopted</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Members present for the final vote</td>
<td>János Áder, Elena Oana Antonescu, Kriton Arsenis, Pilar Ayuso, Paolo Bartolozzi, Sergio Berlato, Milan Cabrnoch, Martin Callanan, Nessa Childers, Chris Davies, Esther de Lange, Anne Delvaux, Bas Eickhout, Edite Estrela, Jill Evans, Elisabetta Gardini, Julie Girling, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Klaß, Jo Leinen, Peter Liese, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Linda McAvan, Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė, Miroslav Ouzký, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Gilles Pargneaux, Antonia Parvanova, Andres Perello Rodríguez, Mario Pirillo, Pavel Poc, Frédérique Ries, Anna Rosbach, Oreste Rossi, Horst Schnellhardt, Richard Seeber, Theodoros Skylakakis, Boguslaw Sonik, Catherine Soullie, Salvatore Tatarella, Anja Weisgerber, Glenis Willmott, Sabine Wils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</td>
<td>Bill Newton Dunn, Justas Vincas Paleckis, Alojz Peterle, Bart Staes, Michail Tremopoulos, Thomas Ulmer, Marita Ulvskog</td>
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24.3.2010

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

for the Committee on Regional Development

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

Rapporteur: Werner Kuhn

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Considers enhanced connections, involving all modes of transport, to represent an essential contribution to the development of a stronger, more cohesive economy in the Baltic Sea Region;

2. Regards the inclusion of all coastal states as highly desirable in order to promote an efficient, interoperable pan-European transport area which uses and improves existing infrastructure, in particular for rail freight, sea and inland water transport and sustainable means of transport;

3. Stresses the specific situation of the Baltic States, which to a large extent are currently isolated from the European transport network, and takes the view that this strategy should, inter alia, help to address the lack of appropriate infrastructure and accessibility, as well as low interoperability between various national transport networks owing to different technical systems and administrative barriers, in order to develop a comprehensive multimodal transport system across the Baltic Sea Region;

4. Emphasises the importance of integrating the Baltic Sea Region more closely into the TEN-T priority axes, in particular with regard to the Motorways of the Sea (TEN-T 21), extending the rail axis from Berlin to the Baltic coast (TEN-T 1), improving the rail axis from Berlin to the Baltic coast in combination with the Rostock-Denmark Seaway connection, and making more rapid progress in upgrading and using the Rail Baltic axis.
(TEN-T 27); also emphasises the need to complete the interconnections between the Baltic Sea Region and other European regions via the Baltic-Adriatic corridor;

5. Emphasises the need for the development of a transport system in the Baltic Sea Region in order to create conditions for the region’s accessibility and appeal and to connect the Baltic Sea Region to the European transport network; believes that the Commission should continue to carry out regular reviews of the execution of priority projects, as well as to provide the necessary finances for their more rapid implementation;

6. Underlines that one of the common goals of the European Ports Policy is to make European sea ports more competitive, as they often face unfair competition from non-EU ports as well as discriminatory measures adopted in the relevant regional markets by countries adjoining the EU, and notes the situation of the Baltic Sea ports in this regard;

7. Stresses that it is important to enhance the Baltic Sea Region’s transport capacity towards the east, in particular in order to promote transport interoperability, especially for railways, and to speed up freight transit at the borders of the European Union;

8. Believes that particular priority should be given to connections between harbours and inland regions, including by means of inland waterways, so as to ensure that all parts of the region can benefit from the growth of maritime cargo transport;

9. Stresses, in this regard, the need for effective cross-border coordination and cooperation between rail, seaports, inland ports, hinterland terminals and logistics in order to develop a more sustainable intermodal transport system;

10. Underlines the importance of short sea shipping in the Baltic Sea and its contribution to an efficient, environmentally-friendly transport network; points out that the competitiveness of short sea shipping links must be promoted in order to ensure efficient use of the sea; believes for this reason that the Commission needs to provide the European Parliament, as quickly as possible, but by the end of 2010 at the latest, with an impact assessment of the effects of the revised Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention, limiting sulphur in marine fuel oil to 0.1% from 2015 in the areas of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea where sulphur emissions are being monitored;

11. Emphasises that, in this region too, shipping must be made more environmentally friendly by applying stricter standards to local and global ship emission levels, while improving ships’ engines and the quality of their fuel;

12. Welcomes the inclusion, in the Commission’s action plan, of the objective of making the Baltic Sea a model region for clean shipping and a world leader in maritime safety and security; considers these objectives to be crucial to maintaining and enhancing the region’s potential for tourism;

13. Recognises the need for specific measures in support of this objective, including the appropriate use of nautical pilots or demonstrably experienced seafarers for the most challenging straits and ports and the establishment of reliable financing schemes for research and development on the sustainable operation of ships;
14. Recognises that the geographical location of the Baltic Sea Region is exceptional, and that such a location provides opportunities to more actively develop ties with the EU and neighbouring external countries, and also stresses the importance of tourism to the regional economy and the scope for expansion; welcomes the declaration adopted at the 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, which referred to common promotional activities, efforts to find new international markets and infrastructure development;

15. Underlines the unique opportunity for sustainable tourism offered by the attractiveness of the Hanseatic cities in the Baltic Region; supports, furthermore, the promotion of cross-border cycle tourism, thereby creating win-win effects for the environment and for small and medium-sized enterprises;

16. Considers themes such as water sports, wellness and spa tourism, the cultural heritage and landscapes to offer great potential for developing the region’s profile as a tourist destination; stresses, therefore, the need to protect natural coastal areas, landscapes and the cultural heritage as a resource for ensuring a sustainable economy in the Baltic Sea Region in the future;

17. Regards improvements in transport links and the elimination of bottlenecks to be of no less importance, and notes that border-crossing difficulties at checkpoints on the EU’s eastern border with the Russian Federation, which cause long queues of lorries and pose threats to the environment, social harmony, traffic safety and drivers’ safety, could be solved via this strategy in order to ensure the smooth flow of goods through the Baltic Sea Region;
### RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<tr>
<td>Magdalena Alvarez, Inés Ayala Sender, Georges Bach, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Michael Cramer, Christine De Veyrac, Saïd El Khadraoui, Ismail Ertug, Carlo Fidanza, Knut Fleckenstein, Jacqueline Foster, Mathieu Grosch, Georgios Kountoutsakos, Werner Kuhn, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Gesine Meissner, Hella Ranner, Vilja Savisaar, Olga Sehnalová, Brian Simpson, Dirk Sterckx, Silvia-Adriana Ţicău, Georgios Toussas, Giommaria Uggias, Thomas Ulmer, Peter van Dalen, Dominique Vlasto, Artur Zasada, Roberts Zīle</td>
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<td><strong>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</strong></td>
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<td>Zigmantas Balčytis, Philip Bradbourn, Isabelle Durant, Tanja Fajon, Ádám Kósa, Dominique Riquet, Laurence J.A.J. Stassen, Sabine Wils, Janusz Władysław Zemke</td>
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RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<th>3.6.2010</th>
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| Members present for the final vote | François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Sophie Auconie, Catherine Bearder, Jean-Paul Besset, Victor Boştinaru, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Francesco De Angelis, Rosa Estarás Ferragut, Elie Hoarau, Danuta Maria Hübner, Ian Hudghton, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Seán Kelly, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Jacek Olgierd Kurski, Petru Constantin Luhan, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Miroslav Mikolášik, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Franz Obermayr, Wojciech Michal Olejniczak, Markus Pieper, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Monika Smolková, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Michail Tremopoulos, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller |
| Substitute(s) present for the final vote | Bairbre de Brún, Ivars Godmanis, Karin Kadenbach, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Peter Simon, László Surján, Sabine Verheyen |