



2021/2567(RSP)

23/03/2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 227(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on chemical residues in the Baltic Sea based on petitions 1328/2019 and
0406/2020
(2021/2567(RSP))

Dolors Montserrat
on behalf of the Committee on Petitions

**European Parliament resolution on chemical residues in the Baltic Sea based on
petitions 1328/2019 and 0406/2020
(2021/2567(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 3(3) of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), Articles 4 and 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Articles 35 and 37 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- having regard to its Resolution on the ecological problem of the Baltic Sea, the objective of Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy to reduce pollution and hazardous substances and the commitment of the Member States of the European Union to monitor underwater chemical munitions under Directive 2008/56/EC (Marine Strategy Framework Directive);
- having regard to the commitments to "save the sea" and to make the region a world-leader in maritime security under the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the commitment of the Member States of the European Union to eliminate sea-dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordnances under the Action Plan to the European Union maritime security strategy (EUMSS);
- having regard to the European Commission's zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment under § 2.1.8. of the Action plan to the European Green Deal and the commitment of the European Union to halt the loss of biodiversity and to become a world leader in addressing the global biodiversity crisis pursuant to the European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and the European Union Biodiversity Strategy for 2030;
- having regard to the obligations undertaken by States pursuant to Article 2 of the 1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and Article 4 of the 1999 Protocol on Water and Health thereto;
- having regard to the European Commission's upcoming Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme for the 2021-2027 period;
- having regard to the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (the Helsinki Convention), the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the findings of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) on sea-dumped chemical munitions;
- having regard to the commitments of States under the SDG 3.9 to reduce deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and contamination, SDG 6.3 to improve water quality by eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals, SDGs 14.1 and 14.2 to prevent marine pollution and to protect marine and coastal ecosystems;
- having regard to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 1612 (2008) and its Report on the chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea of 28 April 2008;
- having regard to the deliberations on petitions No 1328/2019 and No 0406/2020 during the meeting of the Committee on Petitions held on 3 December 2020;

- having regard to Rule 227(2) of its Rules of Procedure;
- A. whereas at least 50 000 tonnes of these conventional and chemical weapons containing hazardous substances (such as mustard and tear gas, nerve and choking chemical agents) were dumped in the Baltic Sea since the end of the World War II;
- B. whereas these munitions degrade slowly and leak their toxic substances in the water and thus pose danger to human health by food contamination, severe burns and poisoning upon direct contact, to the marine ecosystems and biodiversity, and to the economic activities in the region such as fishing, extracting natural resources and generating energy from renewable energy power plants;
- C. whereas the geographic situation makes the Baltic Sea a semi-enclosed sea with slow water turnover and very low self-cleaning capacity, and whereas it is considered to be one of the most polluted seas in the world experiencing a decrease of oxygen in deep waters thus already putting in danger the marine life;
- D. whereas valuable research has been carried out by the ad hoc working group HELCOM CHEMU, the European Union-funded project "Modelling of Ecological Risks related to Sea-Dumped Chemical Weapons" (MERCW) and by the ad hoc expert groups HELCOM MUNI and HELCOM SUBMERGED;
- E. whereas the need for stronger cooperation was expressed during the Colloquium on the Challenges of Unexploded Munitions in the Sea held on 20 February 2019 in Brussels;
- F. whereas the international community lacks reliable information about the volume, nature and locations of the disposed munitions due to the poor documentation of these activities and the insufficient research on the seabed of the Baltic Sea;
- G. whereas no consensus has been reached on the current state of the munitions, the exact danger they pose and the possible solutions for this problem;
- H. whereas the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme provided funding for the 2011-2014 CHEMSEA, the 2016-2019 DAIMON and the 2019-2021 DAIMON 2 projects in the total amount of EUR 10.13 million (of which EUR 7.8 million (77%) came from the European Regional Development Fund) and which studied the dumping locations, the content and the state of the munitions and how they react to Baltic conditions and which provided administrations with decision-making tools and with training in technologies for risk analysis, remediation methods and environmental impact assessment;
- I. whereas the issue of conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the sea is being addressed by the NATO which is equipped with adequate tools, instruments and experience to successfully resolve this problem;
- J. whereas the CHEMSEA project's conclusion, which ended in 2014, is that while chemical munitions dumping sites do not represent an immediate threat, they will continue to be a problem for the Baltic Sea;
- K. whereas the high transport density and the high rate of economic activities in the Baltic Sea region make this issue not only environmental but also one which has considerable economic implications, including on the fishing industry;

1. Underlines that the environmental and health dangers posed by the munitions disposed in the Baltic Sea after the World War II is not only a regional European but a global problem of serious nature with unpredictable short- and long-term transboundary effects;
2. Urges the international community in the spirit of cooperation and genuine solidarity to enhance the monitoring of dumped munitions, to minimise the possible risks for the marine environment and activities, and urges all sides involved in possession of classified information about the dumping activities and their exact locations to declassify this information and to provide the affected countries, the European Commission and the European Parliament with access to it as a matter of urgency;
3. Calls on the European Commission and the Joint Programming Committee of Interreg Baltic Sea Region to secure adequate financing for research and actions required to resolve the dangers coming from the dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea and welcomes the consistent efforts and the constructive research conducted by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and within the frameworks of the CHEMSEA, the DAIMON and the DAIMON 2 projects financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme;
4. Calls on all sides involved to respect the international environmental law and to provide further financial contributions to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme for the 2021-2027 period and welcomes the 2021-2027 transnational Baltic Sea Region (BSR) programme which will fund measures to reduce the pollution of the Baltic Sea;
5. Stresses the necessity for regular monitoring of the progress of the munitions' corrosion, for an up-to-date environmental risk assessment on the impacts of the released contaminants on human health, the marine ecosystems and the biodiversity in the region;
6. Welcomes the efforts on the national level such as mapping of the locations of the dumped munitions as well as controlling and removing hazardous materials;
7. Emphasises in this relation the importance of inter-State and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms, of the free access to public information and of the efficient exchange of scientific knowledge and research;
8. Calls on the European Commission in relation to its zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment to establish jointly with the affected Member States and other stakeholders and organisations an expert group with a mandate: (i) to study and map the exact locations of contaminated areas; (ii) to propose suitable environmentally-friendly and cost-effective solutions for controlling and cleaning the pollution with the ultimate aim of removal or full neutralisation of the hazardous materials where extraction is impossible; (iii) to develop reliable decision-making support tools; (iv) to conduct an awareness-raising campaign in order to inform the affected groups (such as fishermen, inhabitants, tourists and investors) of the potential health-related and economic risks and (v) to develop emergency response guidelines in case of an environmental disaster;
9. Regrets that none of the allocated EUR 8.8 million from the European Neighbourhood Instrument were used for the DAIMON and the DAIMON 2 projects under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme;
10. Calls on the European Commission to engage all relevant European agencies and

institutions to utilise all available resources, including the European Defence Agency and to make sure that the problem will be reflected in all the relevant European Union policies and in the programming processes, including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the European Union Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan;

11. Calls on the European Commission to ensure that the subject of dumped munitions in the European seas is included in the horizontal programmes allowing the submission of projects covering regions affected by the same problem (the Adriatic-Ionian, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea) and enabling the exchange of experiences and best practices;
12. Asks the European Commission to engage in serious efforts on tackling the pollution in the Baltic Sea and to this end to foster all types of cooperation on the regional, national and international levels, including in the framework of its partnership with the NATO;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the European Commission, the governments and the parliaments of the Member States and the other States concerned.