

**NDPHS Strategy Working Group  
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<b>Reference</b>	SWG 4/3/Info 3
<b>Title</b>	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – governance and implementation
<b>Submitted by</b>	Secretariat
<b>Summary / Note</b>	<p>This document has been developed by the European Commission services in the follow-up of a meeting of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region priority area coordinators, held on 8 July 2009 in Brussels, Belgium. The NDPHS Secretariat, which attended the meeting at the invitation of the Swedish EU Presidency, provided the SWG Members with a short PM about its intervention during the meeting in an e-mail dated the same day.</p> <p>The purpose of this present document is to provide the SWG Members with the EC's views regarding the governance and implementation of the Strategy including, but not limited to the role of a priority area coordinator and a flagship project leader. Considering that the EC has proposed that the NDPHS assume such roles with regard to the priority sub-area "health," when developing the paper proposing the NDPHS goals and targets, the SWG Chair and the Secretariat have closely followed the respective section of the Strategy Action Plan (cf. also document SWG 4/3/Info 2).</p>
<b>Requested action</b>	For information

**EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION**  
*Governance and Implementation*

## **Overall approach**

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is an innovative approach to policy delivery for the following reasons:

- It concerns a macro-region, linked by the Baltic Sea, that includes entire Member States, parts of Member States and parts of third countries;
- It is an integrated strategy concerning issues that go beyond specific policy areas to address the entire range of challenges and opportunities of the region through international, European Union, national and regional policies and instruments
- The responses facilitated by the Strategy do not call for more funding but rather the better use of available resources and legislative coordination and changes.

These features demand a tailor-made approach to implementing and developing the Strategy – one that will take account of the wide range of stakeholders, funding sources and legal bases involved. However, given the relatively unknown nature of the task, it would be prudent to make use, so far as possible, of existing, proven, approaches. And the approach must be flexible, in view of the wide range of actions within the Strategy, and adaptable in the light of progress on implementation.

It is also important to remember that the Strategy is a strategy of the European Union. While it is obviously of prime concern to those states whose territory lies in the Baltic Sea Region, it is of legitimate interest to all Member States and the governance approach must recognise this. No exclusive groups of Member States should be established, and the approach developed should be applicable, *mutatis mutandis* to other comparable macro-regional strategies that may be developed.

Finally, we cannot forget that this European Union strategy will impact on neighbouring third countries and moreover will depend for its success, in specific areas, on those countries. A mechanism must therefore be applied that respects the autonomy of third countries while encouraging their constructive involvement.

## **Policy co-ordination**

The Strategy was requested by the European Council in December 2007 and has been delivered to the European Council in June 2009. The involvement of Heads of State and Government underlines the importance given to the integrated nature of the operation. It is therefore essential that a co-ordinated, integrated approach be preserved as the strategy develops and adapts.

The Commission therefore recommends that the Council of the European Union – General Affairs (GAERC) takes responsibility for assuring the political direction of the strategy. This will involve receiving reports (from the Commission via the COREPER) and making recommendations to the Member States and stakeholders. Other Council formations may

address specific issues as the Presidency determines, and the European Council should be updated periodically on the progress of the Strategy.

As indicated above, preparation and servicing of the GAERC discussions will be undertaken by the European Commission. This will be associated with the monitoring and co-ordination activities described below so that there is a specific location that is in possession of all relevant information about the progress and development of the Strategy.

## **Monitoring, coordination and reporting on the Strategy**

This task will be assumed by the European Commission. Clearly it cannot operate alone so certain structures and procedures will need to be developed to ensure that information flows freely.

In particular, the Commission will convene a High-Level Working Group of Senior Officials from all Member States to consult with on the progress of the Strategy. It will be open to this group to invite additional members, whether from key stakeholders such as inter-governmental organisations or from policy Ministries, according to the needs of the current task. This group will advise the European Commission on the regular report on the Strategy and on recommendations for any necessary adaptations to the Strategy or action plan.

For issues concerning third countries, the European Commission will work primarily but not exclusively through the mechanism of the Northern Dimension. Other inter-governmental and regional bodies such as HELCOM, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Baltic Sea States will be invited to participate as partners or channels according to their respective competences.

In order to ensure a full flow of information and sustained involvement of partners and stakeholders in the Strategy, an Annual Forum will be organised. It will involve the European Commission and other EU Institutions, Member States, Regional and Local Authorities and Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Bodies and can be open to the public. The aim is (a) to inform stakeholders about progress, (b) to get their feedback and ideas and (c) to prepare the next steps. The forum should cover the entire scope of the Strategy and be organised by an appropriate partner. The first Annual Forum should take place in the spring of 2010 (9 months after adoption).

## **Implementation of the Strategy**

The European Commission, and all the stakeholders, are very aware that the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will only be useful and effective if it leads to specific actions on the ground. For this reason, the European Commission has published an indicative Action Plan, prepared in very close cooperation with the Member States and other partners in the region, which incorporates both ongoing and planned actions as well as specific flagship projects.

As author and coordinator of the Action Plan the European Commission will be fully committed to monitoring, coordination and promotion of the implementation of the actions and projects within it. The success of the strategy will depend, however, on the commitment and active involvement of stakeholders, particularly in the concrete implementation of the actions and projects. The Commission will also disseminate good practice in setting up flagship projects based on previous experience. In order to ensure that the Action Plan, and strategy, remain fully responsive to the needs of the region, the Commission proposes formalising the involvement of

Member States and other stakeholders in two ways: co-ordination of priority areas and leadership of flagship projects.

### ***The role of the Priority Area coordinator***

Priority Areas represent the key tasks to be undertaken to achieve the objectives of the strategy. There are fifteen of these Priority Areas. Each of the Priority Areas has been assigned one or two Member States as coordinator(s), as outlined in the Action Plan. In exceptional cases an inter-governmental body or a regional authority has been given the responsibility for coordination of a Priority Area.

- *The contact details of the person in charge of coordination of a Priority Area in a line ministry or agency should be communicated to the Commission. These contact details shall be made available to all relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders may in turn communicate their contact details and interest in the Priority Area to the coordinator.*

The role as coordinator includes both elements of impulsion, to stimulate other actors to take up the responsibilities, and reporting, so that no area is overlooked or allowed to lag too far behind in implementation. A steering group of the flagship project leaders (convened by the coordinator) is recommended to assist the coordinator in its task. The group could also include relevant experts and / or other stakeholders. It should meet on a regular basis (at least twice a year). The coordinator could use existing inter-governmental and/or pan-Baltic organisations, in order to avoid duplication of structures. The coordinators should also in consultation with the Commission decide the different deadlines applicable for the Flagship Projects in their respective areas.

Each Priority Area coordinator should liaise – through a Steering Group, an existing organisation, or otherwise – with the relevant stakeholders of the Priority Area.

### **Facilitation of the flagship projects**

The Priority Area coordinator should stimulate actors to take up their responsibilities and give overall implementation advice. Where assigned flagship projects leaders are missing, it is the task of the Priority Area coordinator to find a project leader in a transparent way. With a view to get flagship projects running, the coordinator should establish contacts between relevant actors, engage in awareness raising, screen programmes, give financial assistance advice, provide match-making facilities for linked project developments.

In case actions or flagship projects have stalled, the Priority Area coordinator should propose solutions. If the coordinator faces difficulty in the implementation of the Priority Area (e.g. lack of support from other Member States, diverging views, difficulties in relations with third countries), it should inform the Commission.

### **Reporting progress**

The Priority Area coordinator must follow the progress of the actions and flagship projects included in the Priority Area, keep in contact with the flagship project leaders, and inform the Commission regularly of progress.

- *A progress report on each Priority Area should be submitted to the Commission yearly by the coordinator.*

Although the coordinator is not formally responsible for the successful implementation of the Priority Area, it will keep the Commission informed and the two together will report and review progress.

## ***The role of the flagship project leader***

Flagship projects are examples of specific initiatives identified as able to demonstrate the concrete effects of the strategy in a relatively short time-frame. The nature of the projects varies widely, from cooperation among government agencies for a specific purpose to construction of infrastructure or the involvement of private and third sector partners towards a goal. Certain projects have been identified by the Commission as particularly appropriate for rapid implementation and completion: these are designated 'fast track'.

Most need participation by a number of actors to be successfully achieved. Each project should have an identifiable leader assigned to it.

- *Contact details of each flagship project leader should be communicated to the Priority Area coordinator.*

The role of the flagship project leader is organisational; to identify, recruit and motivate other partners, to take the lead in reviewing progress, identifying bottlenecks and reporting (on the basis of information from other partners in the project) on results. All parties interested in taking part in the implementation of a specific flagship project should contact the respective leader to discuss if and how they could be part of the process. The responsibility of the flagship project leader is not financial. Where a proposed flagship project does not yet have financing, the flagship project leader should coordinate the application for funding to the relevant funding instrument(s).

- *Where not yet done, the flagship project leader shall assemble a partnership. It shall find agreement among the partners on specific contents of the projects, the sharing of responsibilities, and the structure of the project.*
- *Where not yet done, and where necessary, the flagship project leader should coordinate the project funding application.*

Many flagship projects are likely to be made up of separate projects, several linked projects, and / or different work packages. If so, the project should have a steering group (or similar) to assist the flagship project leader, made up of the leaders of the constituent parts of the flagship project. This group should be in contact on a virtual basis, but with occasional meetings in person so that trust is established and / or ideas / approaches shared.

The flagship project leader should provide advice at different stages of the project (e.g. good practice, contacts to similar projects, assembly of financial package, etc.), as well as report on progress to the priority area coordinator.

- *The flagship project leader shall assure that the different constituent parts of the project are coherent among each other, and take care of overall reporting.*

## **Conclusion**

The approach proposed by the Commission seeks to combine policy direction under control of the Council of the European Union, co-ordinating responsibility with the European Commission and priority area and project implementation with Member States or other competent actors within the region. All groups will be open to participants from the entire European Union, and where appropriate to partners from third countries as well. This will ensure that the strategy is always in line with the whole of European Union policy, and the approach can readily be adapted to other strategies as necessary.