

## **Baltic Sea region**

### **Defence Environmental**

### **Co-operation (BALTDEC)**

Riga initiative plenary meeting 26 – 29 April 2005 Tallinn, Estonia

#### **Director *Antti Kivipelto***

Ministry Of Defence of Finland

P.O.Box 31

00131 Helsinki, Finland

Tel, + 358 – 9 – 16088215

Fax + 358 – 9 – 16088223

E-mail [antti.kivipelto@plm.vn.fi](mailto:antti.kivipelto@plm.vn.fi)

## **Environmental co-operation in Baltic Sea Region. Review of Finland's MoD**

### **General principles**

- The responsibility of military environmental issues.
- A positive view on all measures, which support environmentally sustainable development, which BALTDEC aims to promote in many ways.
- The progressive environmental protection work strengthens also the stability in the development of security in the Baltic Sea region.
- The Baltic Sea's protection is one of most important environmental topic in Finland's environmental policy.

### **International military environmental cooperation**

- The cooperation of the European Union, called DENET,
- The cooperation of NATO / eapc / pfp, CCMS (Committee on the Challenges of the Modern Society), pilot studies of the CCMS,
- The cooperation of Nordic countries, (Nordic Agenda 21 for the defence sector, cooperation with defence administrations, defence forces, establishments etc)
- The Baltic Sea Region military environmental cooperation, called BALTDEC.
- The bilateral cooperation with the neighbouring countries and with a number of other countries

## **Other environmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region**

### **The Nordic Co-operation**

<http://www.norden.org/>

**The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)** Convention on the protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, established 1974, Nordic countries, Baltic countries, Germany, Poland, Russia and the European Community

<http://www.helcom.fi/>

**The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)**, established in 1992, Nordic Countries, Baltic countries, Germany, Poland, Russia and a member of the European Commission

<http://www.cbss.st/>

**The European Union's the Northern Dimension.** Co-operation between the EU together with its individual member states and non-member partner countries in the Northern Europe. The first plan of action 2000.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/north\\_dim/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/north_dim/index.htm)

**The Arctic Council.** Intergovernmental forum in the Arctic Region, Nordic countries, Canada, the United States and Russia, established 1996.

<http://www.northernforum.org/>

**The Barents Euro – Arctic Council (BEAC).** Intergovernmental cooperation in the Barents Region, Nordic countries, Russia and EU commission and some observers, established in 1993.

<http://www.beac.st/>

Attached copies of general information from the above –mentioned organisations

**www.ymparisto.fi**

.....  
Document 1/28/2005 | Environmental administration  
.....

## **International issues**

Environmental problems are often international by nature. Threats to our environment caused by climate change, loss of biological diversity or pollution of the marine environment are examples of problems which can only be solved through cooperation with other countries. The Finnish environmental administration participates in international co-operation to contribute to solving global and regional environmental problems. We are also engaged in cooperation aimed at improving the state of the environment in our neighboring areas (and to promoting sustainable development in developing countries.)

One of Finland's main goals in international cooperation has been to promote and influence the drawing up of legally binding international agreements and their implementation. Indeed, Finland is party to more than a hundred international environmental agreements. We also take part in international processes for developing environmental policy and promoting sustainable development. In this work we put a lot of emphasis on integrating environmental concerns into all sectors of society and economic activities.

Protecting the Baltic Sea is one of the most important goals of Finland's involvement in regional co-operation. Also most of the projects in the framework of our co-operation with the neighboring countries have supported this goal.

Nature in the northern hemisphere is vulnerable and sensitive to pollution. Cooperation for the protection of the Arctic environment is also one of Finland's priorities, as is the wider framework for co-operation in the northern region, the Northern Dimension Action Programme of the European Union.

.....  
© Copyright Valtion ympäristöhallinto

## About HELCOM

The Helsinki Commission, or HELCOM, works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution through intergovernmental co-operation between Denmark, Estonia, the European Community, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area" - more usually known as the Helsinki Convention.

### Organisation

### Goals

### Principles

### Priorities

### Achievements

### Organisation

The Helsinki Commission meets annually. Ministerial level meetings are also held occasionally. The Commission unanimously adopts Recommendations for the protection of the marine environment, which governments of the Contracting Parties must act on in their respective national programmes and legislati





History and organisation >  
 << back

## History and organisation



Participants of the meeting that resulted in the creation of the CBSS  
 Copenhagen, 5-6 March 1992

The Council of the Baltic Sea States was established at a conference of the foreign ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and a member of the European Commission in Copenhagen in March 1992. Iceland joined the CBSS in 1995.

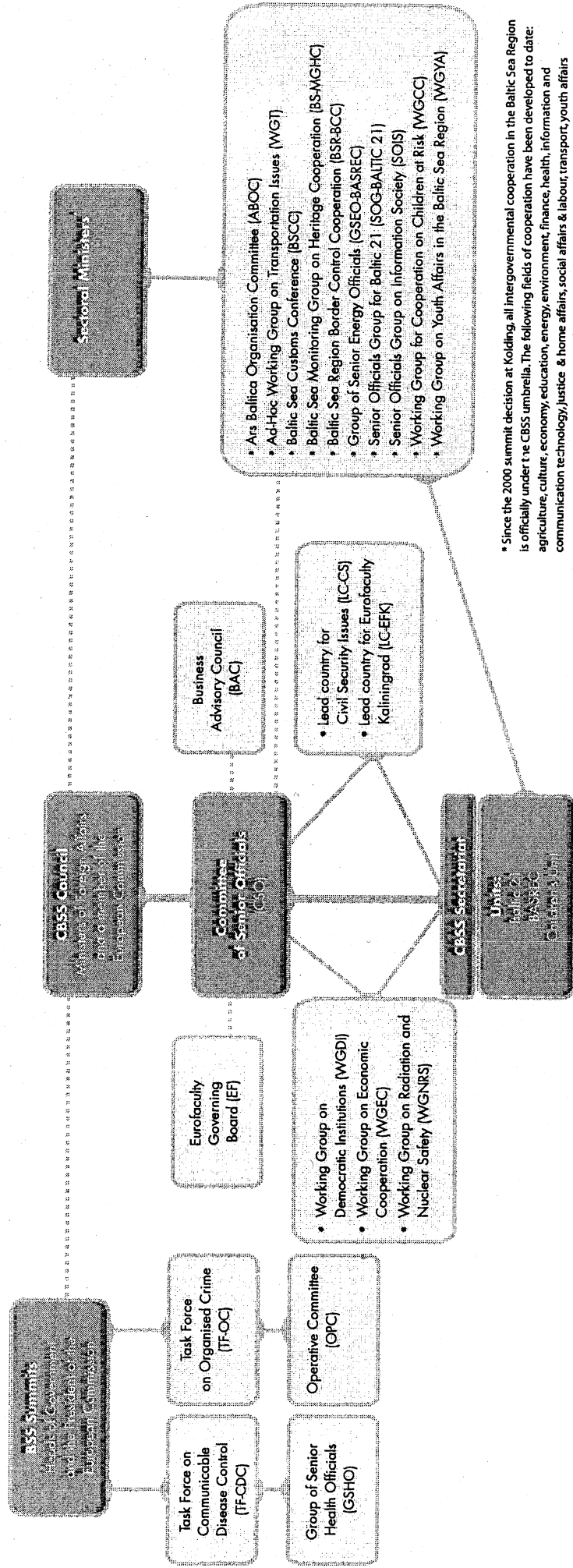
The CBSS serves as an overall regional forum for intergovernmental cooperation, focusing on the need for intensified coordination of activities in virtually every field of government, (*with the notable exception of military defence, which is explicitly excluded as a potential area of cooperation in the Council's Terms of Reference*), among the Baltic Sea States. CBSS Ministerial meetings have been held in the following fields: agriculture; children's affairs; culture, economic affairs, education, energy, finance, health, information technology, interior, justice, labour, social affairs, spatial planning, trade and industry, transport, youth affairs. CBSS meetings at the level of Directors General have been held in the following fields: border control, civil protection, customs, prosecutors-general, tax administration.

The organisational framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States is based on its Terms of Reference. Since its founding, the annual Council sessions at the level of foreign ministers are the main forum for political guidance and overall coordination, and have also served to promote closer interaction with regional organisations at the parliamentary and sub-state level.

Since 1996, the biennial meetings of the CBSS Member States' heads of government have added a new dimension to the work of the CBSS. In accordance with the recommendation of the 3rd Baltic Sea States Summit in 2000, the CBSS officially encompasses all regional intergovernmental, multilateral cooperation among the group of CBSS countries. Field ministers continue to cooperate within their respective areas of responsibility and meet in accordance with their own decisions but the overall coordinating role in the CBSS is the responsibility of the foreign ministers.

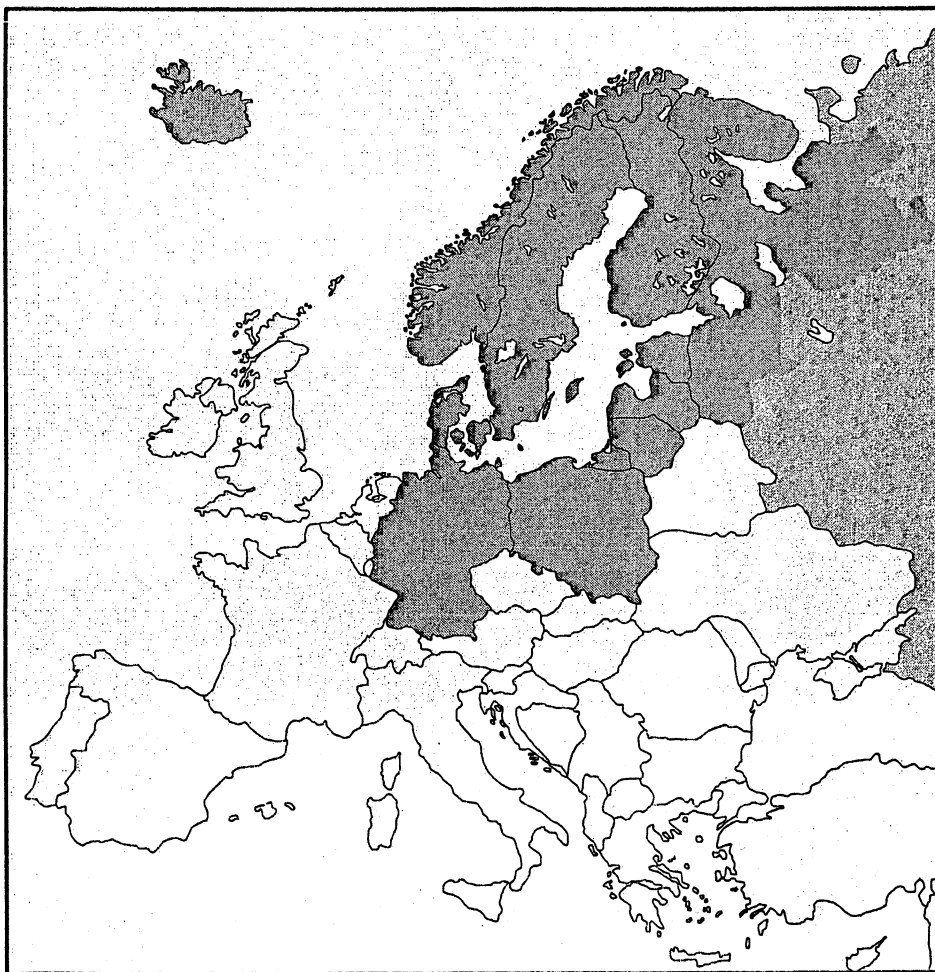
▶ 1992 Terms of Reference for the CBSS

▶ 1992 CBSS 1st Ministerial Session - Copenhagen Declaration



\* Since the 2000 summit decision at Kolding, all intergovernmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region is officially under the CBSS umbrella. The following fields of cooperation have been developed to date: agriculture, culture, economy, education, energy, environment, finance, health, information and communication technology, justice & home affairs, social affairs & labour, transport, youth affairs

# An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region



- DENMARK
- ESTONIA
- FINLAND
- GERMANY
- ICELAND
- LATVIA
- LITHUANIA
- NORWAY
- POLAND
- RUSSIA
- SWEDEN

EUROPE

Baltic 21 - an interactive map (01.01.2004)

# ABOUT BALTIC 21

## Background, objectives, goals, strategy and actors

### Summary

An **Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region**, in short, **Baltic 21**, is founded on the political will to accelerate the work on sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region and to implement Agenda 21 regionally. The process was initiated in 1996 by the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region and involves the eleven countries from the Baltic Sea Region (the members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS), the European Commission and a number of intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions and international non-governmental networks.

The Baltic Sea Region is the first region in the world that has adopted common regional goals for sustainable development. These goals pave the road towards the region's sustainability and include an overall goal, goals for each of the eight Baltic 21 sectors and a goal for spatial planning. The east – west responsibility axis, sector targets and sector implementation provide the foundation for the realisation of ambitious goals. Sector goals are based on the Vision of a Sustainable Baltic Sea Region 2030.

The Baltic 21 Action Programme addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development – the environmental, the social and the economic aspects – and includes goals and indicators. It features thirty different actions, both sectoral and cross-sectoral, which are mostly of pilot and demonstration character and address the transition to sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

### What is Baltic 21?

Baltic 21 is a joint, long-term effort by the 11 countries of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS (see an interactive map on the front page). These countries differ widely as far as economic, social and environmental preconditions are concerned, but they agree on the long-term goals they wish to attain for the region as a whole.

The emphasis is on regional co-operation, and the work is focused on seven economic sectors (agriculture, energy, fisheries, forests, industry, tourism and transport) as well as on spatial planning and on education (see Sectors & Spatial Planning).

Baltic 21 is based on:

- The initiative and the process to develop and implement a regional Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region in order to attain sustainable development in the region according to the document "An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21";
- The Strategy Guidelines adopted by the Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG) at its twenty first meeting, October 2004 are presented below.

### Main objectives and goals

The overriding objective of Baltic 21 is to contribute to achieving sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region in a 30-year perspective. Baltic 21 addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, social and economic aspects.



Long-term aspects, regional co-operation, sectoral responsibility, and openness, democracy and transparency, are the pillars of the Baltic 21 process. Another important feature of Baltic 21 is that it is to complement international, national and local initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region.

The following **overall goal** has been agreed for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region:

The essential objective of the Baltic Sea Region co-operation is the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples within the framework of sustainable development, sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment. Sustainable development includes three mutually interdependent dimensions - economic social and environmental. The means for the region:

- A safe and healthy life for current and future generations.
- A co-operative and prosperous economy and a society for all.
- That local and regional co-operation is based on democracy, openness and participation.
- That biological and ecosystem diversity and productivity are restored or maintained.
- That pollution to the atmosphere, land and water does not exceed the carrying capacity of nature.
- That renewable resources are efficiently used and managed within their regeneration capacity.
- That materials flow of non-renewable resources are made efficient and cyclic, and that renewable substitutes are created and promoted.
- That awareness of the elements and processes leading to sustainability is high among different actors and levels of society.

The Baltic Sea Region recognizes its interdependence with other parts of the world and makes its contribution to the fulfilment of sustainable development goals at the global and European level.

Sectoral goals have also been agreed for agriculture, education, energy, fisheries, forests, industry, tourism and transport, and for spatial planning.

In mid-2004 Baltic 21 revised its work strategy and since then, to better streamline its work, focuses its efforts on four lines of action Baltic 21 in accordance with its Strategy Guidelines.

Finally, using over 100 indicators, Baltic 21 periodically monitors and assesses the development in the region towards the goals and develops reports to ministers and for other stakeholders in the region and elsewhere (see the Periodic Reports for more information).

## **History and background**

In the Presidency Declaration from the Baltic Sea States Summit on 3-4 May, 1996 (Visby, Sweden), the Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) agreed on an Agenda for Action which, besides proposing three thematic Action Programmes covering increased people-to-people co-operation and civic security, economic

co-ordination and co-operation, and strengthened environmental protection, also decided to develop an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region. (More...)

The decision of the Prime Ministers was later followed up by the Fifth Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, on 2-3 July, 1996 (Kalmar, Sweden). At that meeting, the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region in their Communique welcomed the development of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region to be initiated at the forthcoming meeting of the Baltic Ministers of Environment, on 20-21 October 1996 (Saltsjöbaden, Sweden).

An initial background report was produced by the Stockholm Environment Institute for the meeting of the Ministers of Environment. In the Saltsjöbaden Declaration, Towards an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, the scope, format, time schedule and structure of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region was outlined. It was agreed that the Baltic 21 process should cover seven economic sectors of crucial importance for the development in the region: Agriculture, Energy, Fisheries, Forests, Industry, Tourism and Transport, and Spatial Planning.

A document An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21 was developed by Baltic 21 in the period January 1997 to June 1998 and approved by the SOG during its eighth meeting on June 3 - 4, 1998 (Cracow, Poland) for submission to the Foreign Ministers. It was adopted by the Foreign Ministers at the meeting of the Council of the Baltic Sea States on 22-23 June, 1998 (Nyborg, Denmark).

Since the adoption of the Agenda, the implementation of the Baltic 21 Action Programme has been concentrated on:

- Establishing organisational structures and networks;
- Developing a work plan for each of the sectors;
- Creating the necessary framework for the sectors to function in, including defining the role of the Lead Party and of Baltic 21 political support to projects;
- Monitoring and assessing the region's progress towards sustainable development, including the development of periodic reports of 2000 and 2003;
- Developing Baltic 21 policy and strategy for 2004 – 2008. (More...).

In spring 2000, an additional sector - Education - was entered to the Baltic 21 process. The report An Agenda 21 for the Education Sector in the Baltic Sea Region with an action plan for implementing was adopted by the Ministers of Education from the CBSS countries on 24 January, 2002, complementing the existing Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region document.

## **The Agenda**

An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21 comprises the agreed goals (see above) and an Action Programme for sustainable development, including time frames, actors and proposals for financing.

The Agenda has been worked out jointly by a partnership of national governments, regional networks of cities and regions, intergovernmental organisations, the business community, environmental NGOs, and international financial institutions.

The Agenda is based on seven sector reports and a number of other background reports (on spatial planning, financing options, indicators and scenarios) (see reports Baltic 21 Series 2 – 14/98). The Action Programme comprises Joint Actions (issues concerning several sectors) and actions to be implemented by Sectors and Spatial Planning. The implementation phase has started as soon as the Action Programme was

adopted.

Institution-strengthening, structural changes, education, exchange of experience and other non-technical initiatives are at the core of the Action Programme. There is an emphasis on building a foundation for the transition to sustainable development. Developing and implementing activities and projects demonstrating how sustainable development can be brought about in practice is a crucial task for the Baltic 21 network. Baltic 21 recognises different types of projects. However, the programme also contains demonstration and pilot projects, where more concrete investments have been called for.

As mentioned above, in January 2002 a report An Agenda 21 for the Education in the Baltic Sea Region - Baltic 21E with an action plan for implementing was adopted by the Ministers of Education from the CBSS countries. It complements the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region and has been based on the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region Sector Report - Education.

### **Baltic 21 Strategy Guidelines**

According to the document "An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21", Baltic 21 is obliged to report to the Prime Ministers approximately every 5th year for consideration and for decision on any changes or additional action needed.

Baltic 21 submitted its report "Five Years of progress towards sustainable development", including a proposal for a new mandate to the Baltic Sea States Summit in Estonia, June 2004. After the Prime Ministers had taken note of the report, the "new mandate" proposal was brought in line with the summit conclusions and adopted as the **Baltic 21 Strategy Guidelines** by the SOG 21 in October 2004.

#### **Baltic 21 Strategy Guidelines**

**The Mission of Baltic 21 is to pursue sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region by regional multi-stakeholder co-operation. Accordingly, Baltic 21 provides a regional network to implement the globally agreed Agenda 21 and World Summit on Sustainable Development activities, while focusing on the regional context of sustainable development.**

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea States Summit in June 2004 in Estonia, while taking note of the Baltic 21 Five-Year Report, the Heads of Government underlined the importance of integrating the principles of sustainable development into policy making by all relevant stakeholders and expressed their interest in the Baltic 21-proposed concept of making the Baltic Sea region an Eco-Region for Sustainable Development covering the economic, ecological and social spheres.

Baltic 21 is committed to strongly contributing to achieving this goal and will play an instrumental role in the realisation of the agreed concept through the implementation of its new four-pronged strategy as described below.

**1. Baltic 21 will support the CBSS and its processes in the pursuit of sustainable development.**

Baltic 21 will work closely with the CBSS to promote the integration of sustainable development into regional policy making. It will also review regional trends and policies impacting the sustainability of the region, as well as make recommendations to the CBSS for regional discussion, joint action, or for further discussion with other bodies whose policies affect the region.

**2. Baltic 21 Sectors and Spatial Planning will strengthen involvement in cross-sectoral work, and will work towards achieving the agreed goals and visions.**

Sectors and Spatial Planning shall continue to work on bringing added value to regional efforts for sustainable development, with an emphasis on solving regional problems through cross-sectoral cooperation. The Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG) will use its multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral character as a forum for fostering sustainability issues.

**3. Baltic 21 will adopt and act as the umbrella for a focused set of "Lighthouse Projects" designed to demonstrate sustainable development in action.**

Baltic 21 "Lighthouse Projects" are to be selected to ensure high-visibility and to engage as many participating countries and sectors as possible in proving the value-added of sustainable development. "Lighthouse Projects" will differ from "pilot projects" in that they will focus the energy of Baltic 21 within a few specific areas. Also, they are envisaged as transnational in scope, and will involve the broader implementation of existing solutions, in addition to the demonstration of new solutions.

Baltic 21 will also continue to endorse sustainable development initiatives and pilot projects in sectoral or multi-sectoral contexts and encourage the further development of those elements of its Action Programme that have been successful.

**4. Baltic 21 will identify funding sources to support the Lighthouse Projects and other region-level sustainable development initiatives.**

Baltic 21 is to develop an innovative mechanism focused on creating synergies among existing national and other funding sources at the regional-level. It will continue to build on its successful history of securing project-specific financial sponsorship.

## Actors

Baltic 21 has a broad membership and is open, democratic and transparent process based on consensus of all network members:

- The governments of the eleven countries of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
- The European Commission

- Intergovernmental Organizations
- International Financial Institutions
- International Sub-state and City Networks
- International Business Networks
- International Academic Network
- International Environmental Non-governmental Organisations

The Baltic 21 process is steered, coordinated and monitored by the Senior Officials Group (SOG) consisting of representatives of the above named member countries, organizations and institutions. The continually growing Baltic 21 membership aims at reaching out to all levels of the society and involving them in the work for sustainable development.

For more information about various bodies within Baltic 21 see the information under Organisation, which is available under *About Baltic 21* button on the main menu bar.

**www.ymparisto.fi**

.....  
Document 3/17/2005 | Ministry of the Environment  
.....

## **Arctic co-operation**

The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum set up by the Nordic Countries, Canada, the United States and Russia in 1996, whose main task is to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic Region.

Six international organisations representing indigenous communities also have the status of permanent participants in the Arctic Council, including the representatives of the Sámi Peoples of Lapland, the indigenous peoples of northern Russia, and the Inuit and other native Americans from northern parts of Canada and the US. The Arctic Council also has 21 official observers, from countries outside the Arctic Region, from international organisations, and from non-governmental organisations.

The scientific work of the Arctic Council is carried out by a sustainable development working group, and four environmental working groups focusing on the monitoring and assessment of the state of the arctic environment; the conservation of arctic flora and fauna; emergency prevention, preparedness and response; and the protection of the arctic marine environment.

The Arctic Council's programmes on the monitoring and assessment of the state of the arctic environment and the conservation of arctic flora and fauna also include a special project assessing the impacts of climate change and increased ultraviolet radiation in the arctic regions. The council also has a special action plan to combat pollution.

Ministerial-level meetings of the Arctic Council are held every two years, with chairmanship rotating among member countries. Between the ministerial meetings, the council's work is administered by the Committee of Senior Arctic Officials. Finland's arctic co-operation is co-ordinated by the Foreign Ministry.

.....  
© Copyright Valtion ympäristöhallinto



BEAC OFFICIAL WEB SITE

Facts & Maps

Photo Gallery

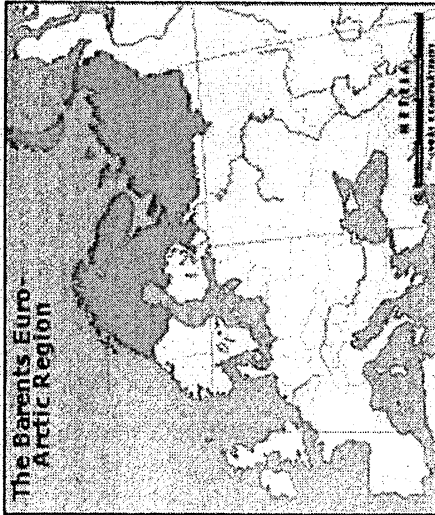
Calendar of Events

Chair Country / Contact

- ▶ Barents Euro - Arctic Council
- ▶ Committee of Senior Officials

- Regional Council
- Regional Committee
- Meetings of the BRC and RC
- Indigenous Peoples
- ▶ Barents working groups and activities
- ▶ Regional Working Groups
- ▶ Documents & Publications
- ▶ Links
- Newsletter
- ▶ Discussion Forum
- Organisation chart
- Northern Dimension

# BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL (BEAC)



The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) is forum for intergovernmental cooperation in the Barents Region.

BEAC was established in 1993 in order to "provide impetus to existing cooperation and consider new initiatives and proposals" (Kirkenes declaration of 11 January 1993).

BEAC wishes to provide you with extensive information about the history of the co-operation, its organisational structure, terms of reference and basic documents. And also information about the Region itself, maps, photos etc. This Website covers ongoing co-operation in several important fields such as energy, environment, economy etc. It is also a portal to numerous other fields of co-operation in the Barents Region.



**Action plan against trafficking in human beings 2005-2006.**  
[More](#)

**Action plan on customs cooperation in 2005.** [More](#)

**Barents Industrial Partnership Meetings**  
3rd meeting was held in Oslo on 15 March 2005.  
[More](#)

**Barents Indigenous Peoples Year 2005**  
Press release.  
[Programme](#) for the year.  
[More](#) about the indigenous peoples.  
[Office in Murmansk.](#)

**BEAC Midterm Review Meeting** was held on 13 - 15 September 2004.

**Barents Regional Council and Committee.** [Annual report 2004.](#)

## Special Info

▶ [Introduction to the web site](#)

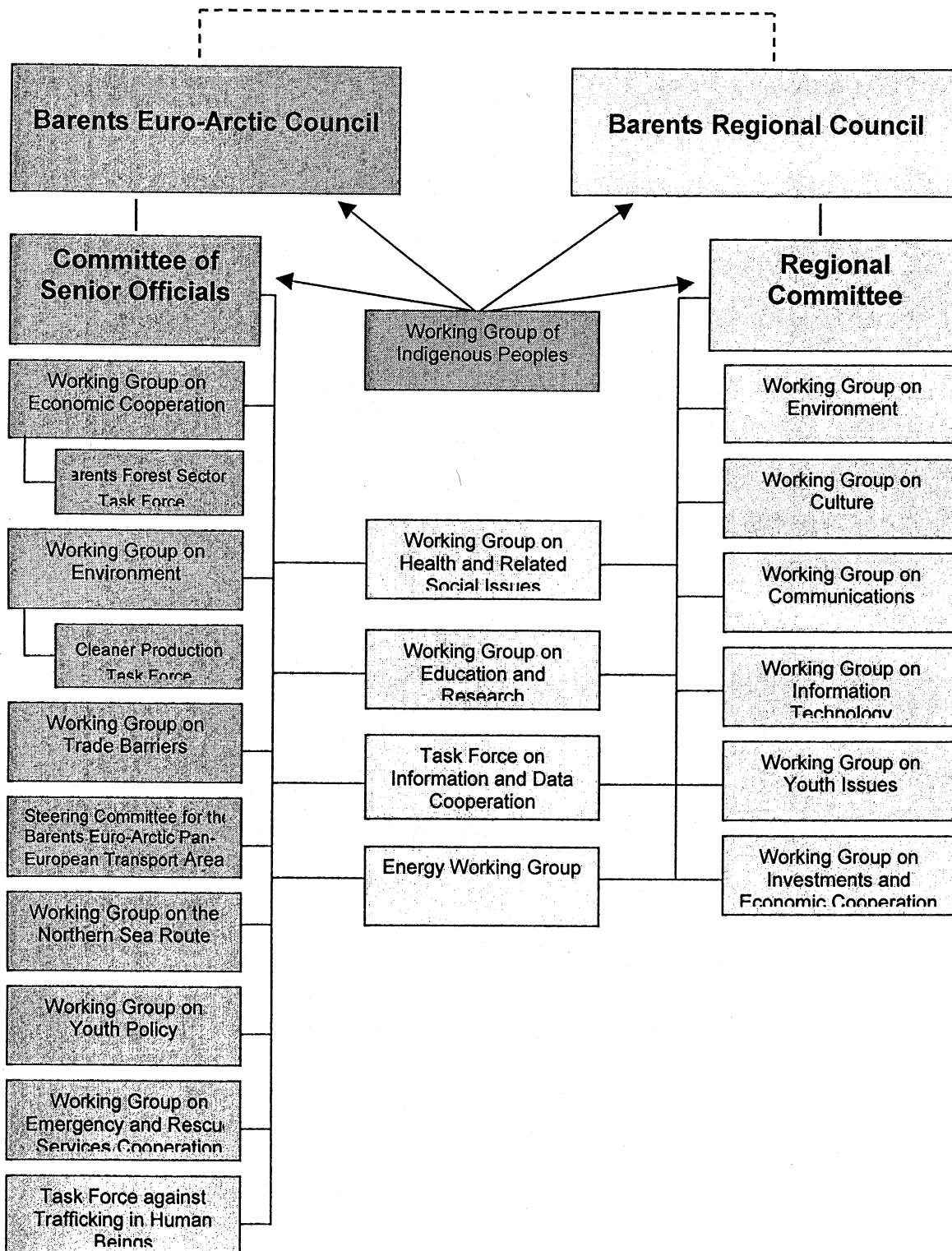
**Barents cooperation:**  
Economic cooperation, trade and investment. Customs cooperation. Energy. Transport. Information technology. Other links to business and economy in the Barents Region.

**Barents cooperation: The environment and nuclear safety**  
Environmental protection. MNEPR and nuclear safety.

**Barents cooperation: Human and social development**  
Education and research, health and related social issues, culture, youth policy, indigenous peoples issues, gender issues.  
[Link](#)



# Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation



February 2005

**www.ymparisto.fi**

.....  
Document 1/29/2004 | Ministry of the Environment  
.....

## **EU's northern dimension**

The main function of the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the European Union is to promote co-operation between the EU together with its individual member states and non-member partner countries in Northern Europe, including Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway and Iceland.

The first plan of action for the EU's northern dimension was approved in 2000. A second plan of action is currently in the pipeline for the period 2004-2006, when the EU will have expanded considerably, making co-operation on issues related to NW Russia and other regions around the EU's borders even more important.

Environmental protection is again a key element of the second action plan. The main aims are to reduce polluting emissions, to develop environmental legislation and administration, and to ensure environmental issues are duly considered as progress is made on economic co-operation. Maritime safety at sea is a particularly crucial issue, especially where oil transportation is concerned.

### **The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Fund**

The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Fund (NDEP) has been set up to promote projects related to environmental improvements, energy savings and nuclear waste processing in NW Russia and the Kaliningrad region. The most significant single environmental project is the construction of a new waste water treatment plant for SE St Petersburg.

Members of the NDEP fund include the EU Commission, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Russia, as well as several international financial institutions, notably the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and the Nordic Investment Bank.

.....  
© Copyright Valtion ympäristöhallinto

**www.ymparisto.fi**

Document 3/17/2005 | Ministry of the Environment

## **Nordic co-operation**

- › Participation in the EU and other international processes
- › Co-operation with Russia and in the Arctic Region
- › Transboundary waters

Finland has long co-operated closely with the other Nordic Countries, particularly through participation in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council. The Nordic Council of Ministers is an intergovernmental organisation, while the Nordic Council is a co-operative body involving the parliaments of each country. The goal of Nordic environmental co-operation is to safeguard and improve the quality of the environment in the Nordic Region, and to influence regional and international co-operation.

National environment ministers are responsible for environmental issues within the Nordic Council of Ministers. Five permanent environmental working groups, including experts representing the public authorities from each country, each focus on specific issues related to the sea and air; chemicals; environmental data and monitoring; nature, recreation and culture; and products and waste.

The Nordic Council of Ministers also sets up temporary working groups, and environmental issues are also involved in the work of cross-sectoral working groups. The other sectors behind these groups are especially the sectors dealing with agriculture and forestry, consumption, fisheries, energy and private enterprise

### **Participation in the EU and other international processes**

The Nordic Countries strive to combine their influence in the European Union and other international organisations, such as the OECD and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), by launching joint initiatives, by issuing joint statements on issues where the Nordic Countries share common interests, and by providing expert support.

### **Co-operation with Russia and in the Arctic Region**

Areas where the Nordic Countries have traditionally been involved in regional co-operation include NW Russia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Co-operation with Russia is being intensified, since co-operation with the Baltic Countries, who joined the European Union in 2004, will in future largely be organised through EU frameworks. The Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) finance many environmental projects in nearby regions.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is an observer member of the Arctic Council, and is also actively involved in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council all participate in the implementation of the EU Northern Dimension Action Plan through regional co-operation.

### **Transboundary waters**

Finland shares many river systems and lakes with Sweden, Norway and Russia. Issues related to these waters are dealt with by transboundary water commissions set up through bilateral agreements.