

Baltic Green Belt (BGB) is a project that is part-financed by the European Union (ERDF) within the BSRP programme

Introduction to CCB workshop at the BGB 2nd Forum the 14th of April 2010 in Palanga

Inventory of the need for proper protection of the coastal zones

1. Status of the Baltic Sea

The Baltic Sea is one of the largest semi-enclosed brackish water areas in the world. In fact, it can be described as a “super estuary” rather than a sea even though it is connected with the contiguous global oceans via the Sound and the Danish Belt channels. Its water comes mainly from the many rivers of the bordering countries, but periodically inflows of salty marine water from the Kattegat dilute the input of fresh water. The Baltic Sea is characterized by unique variations in salinity showing a gradient from north to south as well as vertically. This stratification forms effective barriers that prevent oxygen rich water from the surface layers from penetrating and mixing downwards in the water column. The variation in salinity is the major reason why biodiversity of animal and plant life is so limited in number of species, because the salt gradient is an important stressor to both freshwater and marine species. Human influence on this ecosystem has had profound negative consequences to the Baltic Sea environment. Eutrophication from numerous terrestrial and aquatic sources, over fishing, emission of hazardous substances and destructive development of the coastline have contributed to this situation. Over fishing of the dominant predatory fish species in the Baltic Sea – the cod – has worsened the situation and will greatly delay any attempt to restore both water quality and the biological status of the ecosystem.

2. Overview of the Baltic Sea Coastal Hot Spots

Human activities along the Baltic Sea¹ coasts imply threats and problems to the natural coastal ecosystem, both environmental, recreational and sustainable development values. This project is further meant to help implement the HELCOM Recommendation 15/1 on Coastal Strip Protection. Thus, the hot spots chosen provide a mix of general trends in coastal protection representing present and future threats. All citizens of the Baltic Sea region, including their officials and politicians, ought to be concerned about the threats to these

¹ <http://ccb.se/hotspotgreenbelt.html>

coastal environmental values, and look for ways of countering and safeguarding them. In fact, all Baltic Sea coastal areas require adequate and detailed spatial planning and management plans.

See Annex 1, p 7

3. Examples of EU-strategies that have relevance for a sustainable development of the coast of the Baltic Sea.

3.1 HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 15/1

PROTECTION OF THE COASTAL STRIP²

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

- a) that the Contracting Parties take all appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the coastal strip;
- b) that a generally protected coastal strip therefore be established outside urban areas and existing settlements, the width of which shall be determined by the nature and landscape values of the coast, extending at least 100 to 300 meters from the mean water line landwards and seawards;
- c) that in this protected coastal strip
 - activities which would permanently change the nature and landscape such as extraction of soil and minerals, construction of buildings (except for buildings necessary for existing farming or fishing and saunas in connection with existing buildings), marinas, roads, camping grounds etc. not be allowed except when proved overwhelmingly in the public interest and when it is proved that no less sensitive site can be found;
 - intensive forestry and intensive farming including drainage be restricted;
- d) that exceptions can be made from the provisions in points b)-c) by a land use plan approved and sanctioned by an appropriate authority;
- e) that a zone of at least 3 kilometres landwards from the mean water line be established as a coastal planning zone where major building development and other major permanent changes in nature and landscape be preceded by an appropriate land use plan, including environmental impact assessment, approved at least on regional level.

3.2.1 Integrated Coastal Zone Management

² http://www.helcom.fi/Recommendations/en_GB/rec15_1/

The fundamental purpose of all integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) initiatives is to maintain, restore or improve specified qualities of coastal ecosystems and their associated human societies. A defining feature of ICZM is that it addresses needs for both development and conservation in geographically specific places—be they a single community, an estuary or the coast of an entire nation.³

3.2.2 Evaluation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe⁴

National Reporting

European Coastal Member States (20 + 4 Accession and Candidate Countries) were encouraged through a Communication from the Commission and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the implementation of ICZM in Europe in May 2002 to elaborate and implement, by February 2006, a national integrated coastal zone management strategy on the basis of a national stocktaking (see also project overview).

The Recommendation also established eight principles to be followed in the national strategies that had been established on the basis of experiences developed by the Demonstration Programme:

1. A broad overall perspective (thematic and geographic) which will take into account the interdependence and disparity of natural systems and human activities with an impact on coastal areas;
2. A long-term perspective which will take into account the precautionary principle and the needs of present and future generations;
3. Adaptive management during a gradual process which will facilitate adjustment as problems and knowledge develop. This implies the need for a sound scientific basis concerning the evolution of the coastal zone;
4. Local specificity and the great diversity of European coastal zones, which will make it possible to respond to their practical needs with specific solutions and flexible measures;
5. Working with natural processes and respecting the carrying capacity of ecosystems, which will make human activities more environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically sound in the long run;
6. Involving all the parties concerned (economic and social partners, the organisations representing coastal zone residents, non-governmental organisations and the business sector) in the management process, for example by means of agreements and based on shared responsibility;

³ Olsen, Stephen B., Elsevier, *Ocean & Coastal Management* 46 (2003) 347–361

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/evaluation/iczm_national_reporting.html

7. Support and involvement of relevant administrative bodies at national, regional and local level between which appropriate links should be established or maintained with the aim of improved coordination of the various existing policies. Partnership with and between regional and local authorities should apply when appropriate;
8. Use of a combination of instruments designed to facilitate coherence between sectoral policy objectives and coherence between planning and management.

3.3. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a key instrument in promoting territorial cohesion with both land and maritime dimensions. In this context, the strategy aims at ensuring that policies at all levels (local, regional, national and at the level of the European Union both for the maritime and terrestrial policies) all contribute to a competitive, cohesive and sustainable development of the region.⁵

3.4. EU Maritime Policy

The environmental objective ranks as a high priority based on the urgency of addressing the ecological and environmental decline of the Baltic Sea in particular. Whilst the development of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region also needs to address environmental concerns in land areas, the priority given to the marine environment reflects the 2007 European Council conclusions, highlighting that the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region must address the urgent environmental challenges related to the Baltic Sea. Fulfilment of this objective will also secure the full economic potential of the goods and services provided by the marine ecosystem, thereby improving the well-being and health of people living in the region, and in line with the overall objectives of the Integrated Maritime Policy. The Action Plan introduces the notion of interdependence of countries in the Baltic Sea Region in the field of environment, especially with regard to the pollution of the Baltic Sea.⁶

3.5. Marine Strategy Directive

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive establishes European Marine Regions on the basis of geographical and environmental criteria. Each Member State - cooperating with other Member States and non-EU countries within a marine region - are required to develop strategies for their marine waters.

⁵ ACTION PLAN for the

European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region , p 68

⁶ ACTION PLAN

European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region , p 6

The marine strategies to be developed by each Member State must contain a detailed assessment of the state of the environment, a definition of "good environmental status" at regional level and the establishment of clear environmental targets and monitoring programmes.

Each Member State must draw up a programme of cost-effective measures. Prior to any new measure an impact assessment which contains a detailed cost-benefit analysis of the proposed measures is required.⁷

3.5 Europe's nature conservation policy.

The Habitats Directive (together with the [Birds Directive](#)) forms the **cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy**. It is built around two pillars: the [Natura 2000 network](#) of protected sites and the strict system of species protection. All in all the directive protects over 1.000 animals and plant species and over 200 so called "habitat types" (e.g. special types of forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.), which are of European importance.⁸

3.5.1 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat⁹

3.5.2. Natura 2000 network in the marine environment. Application of the Habitats and Birds Directives¹⁰

(2.6.2.) Applicability of Nature Directives in the Sea. To what extent do Habitats and Birds directives apply?

History of discussions about geographical scope of the directives

The initial position of a number of Member States was to see their obligations restricted to territorial waters, i.e. up to 12 nautical miles from the baselines. The Commission has consistently challenged this, arguing for a more extensive scope since, clearly, the protection of marine habitats and species, which are included in the annexes of the Directives, cannot be adequately achieved in such a limited area. After a number of years of debate and following discussions between the Legal Services of the Commission and Council, the Council recognised the need for implementation of the nature directives in the EEZ as a key element for the protection of the marine ecosystem (See Fisheries Council conclusions Luxembourg, 2001¹¹). This acknowledgement supports the application to the exclusive economic zone which in the case of the Atlantic seaboard extends up to 200 nautical miles (370,4km) from the coastline for different Member States.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/marine/index_en.htm

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm

⁹ http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-texts-convention-on/main/ramsar/1-31-38%5E20671_4000_0__

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/docs/marine_guidelines.pdf

This opinion was confirmed by the position of the European Court of Justice delivered in the judgment of case C-6/04 of 20 October 2005, and other Member States Courts' positions (e.g.: the UK Case n°CO/1336/1999 *The Queen -v- The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry ex parte Greenpeace Limited*¹²)

3.7. CAP – Special focus on organic farming

Meeting the needs of farmers and consumers

Farms and forests cover most of Europe's land and are vital for our health and economy. The EU's common agricultural policy ensures that farming and preservation of the environment go hand-in-hand. It helps develop the economic and social fabric of rural communities and plays a vital role in confronting new challenges such as climate change, water management, bioenergy and biodiversity.¹³

Agricultural activities have far-reaching effects on the environment by altering natural habitats and affecting landscapes, plants and animals. That is why the European Union pays the utmost attention to environmental issues when developing the common agricultural policy (CAP) and promotes sustainable agriculture that is respectful of the natural environment. The 2003 CAP reform marked an important step by making the granting of community funding conditional upon compliance with environmental standards. Community initiatives also aim to limit all pollution of agricultural origin, to promote the development of the production and use of biofuels, and to protect biodiversity. The Union also optimises the benefits of forests and supports initiatives aimed at preventing fires and safeguarding wildlife, natural habitats and birds.

3.8. The Implementation of Council Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the Protection of Waters against Pollution caused by Nitrates from Agricultural Sources

CONCLUSION¹⁴

Although incomplete and lacking of coherence, the water monitoring networks set up by Member States show that more than 20% of EU groundwaters are facing excessive nitrates

¹¹ Extract from the Annex to Council Conclusions on the Strategy for the Integration of Environmental Concerns and Sustainable development into the Common Fisheries policy, -Luxembourg, 25 April 2001: Point 15. *The Habitats and Birds Directives(5), and specially the associated network of protected sites in the marine environment "Natura 2000", constitute a key element for the protection of the marine ecosystem which may have consequences on fisheries. Member States are encouraged, in co-operation with the Commission, to continue their work towards the full implementation of these directives in their exclusive economic zones.*

REF: http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/agricult/ACF20DE.html

¹² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/rrpac/marine/06.htm#fn>

¹³ Policy areas of the European Union, Agriculture.
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/environment/index_en.htm

¹⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-nitrates/report.html>

concentrations, with a continuous increasing trend in the most intensive areas of livestock breeding and fertiliser consumption.

At least 30-40% of rivers and lakes show eutrophication symptoms or bring high nitrogen fluxes to coastal waters and seas. **The agricultural origin of these N fluxes accounts for 50 to 80% of total N inputs to EU waters**, depending on Member States, watersheds and annual variations (Be, Dk, D, Fr, Irl reports to the EC, and EEA report n° 4 "nutrients in European ecosystems" - 1999). following a delay of 5 years or more by Member States to fulfil their commitments for implementation of the Directive and an effective reduction of N losses from agriculture to water, **a real improvement can be pointed out in the sensibilisation of Member States during recent years**. All M. S. have now transposed the directive, set up a comprehensive monitoring network, established a code of good practice, and designated at least partially their vulnerable zones (except Ireland). Indeed the effects of action programmes, often published only in 1997-1999, will be significant only after some years ("tanker" effect of soil and groundwaters), but **success stories can already be noticed in regions where intense field controls, including soil analysis, have accompanied dissemination of good practice advice** (e.g. in Denmark, some German Länder, East of France, Algarve).

The gradual orientation of the Common Agricultural Policy to take greater account of environmental issues contributes to the purposes of the Nitrates directive. **A CAP more oriented towards quality rather than quantity, encouraging extensive cropping or breeding, "buffer" natural areas and accurate balanced fertilisation, can further contribute to these purposes.**

However, the failure of a proper application of the "Nitrate" directive in some Member States cannot be rectified only through CAP measures. Controlling nitrate emission is still primarily the task of transposition and implementation of the "Nitrate" Directive. **Cost-efficiency studies on preventive measures should also be encouraged, in order to focus action programmes and practice changes towards the most efficient one.**

Besides financial support for a more environmental-friendly agriculture and dissemination of knowledge, it is necessary that all Member States arrive at a full implementation of the Nitrate Directive, **reinforce surveys and controls** at field level (including checking of fertilisation plans and records, manure storage and handling, soil analysis, natural buffer strips, etc.), **and introduce dissuasive penalties** for the producers who do not ensure **eco-compliance**.

Appendix 1.

The location and rationale for these hotspots are found at www.ccb.se (Baltic Sea Coastal Hot Spots: Hazards and Threats to the Baltic Sea Coastal Environmental Values (2009)).

Russian hot spots

A general plan for coastal development does not exist, neither in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland nor in the Kaliningrad area. Despite the presence of internationally recognized Ramsar sites and several regional nature protected areas the coastal zone is exposed to

intensive industrial pressure. Several harmful installations are planned and realized, and the new Russian legislation, amended in 2007, has practically abandoned the environmental examination of hazardous activities and also failed to perform standard environmental impact assessments (EIA). Decisions on project implementation are now taken at the federal level even though they may have transboundary impact on the entire Baltic Sea region. In addition, there is no national Russian mechanism to implement the international legal rules concerned with mitigation of potential transboundary impact of planned environmentally harmful installations, because Russia has not yet ratified the Espoo Convention, even though they have signed it. The Water Code of the Russian Federation states that there should be a 500 m wide coastal protection strip, but planning as well as constructing and operating industrial and other activities are allowed within this strip.

Sosnovy Bor nuclear power plant

This nuclear power plant complex (LNPP-2) is the largest in the Baltic Sea region. Construction of its six reactors started in 2007 without taking into account the unsolved problems, like decommissioning of the old Leningrad NPP (LNPP-1) with four Chernobyl type reactors, long-term isolation and storage of spent nuclear fuel and reprocessing of radioactive waste. As mentioned above such decisions are taken at the federal/national level and municipal authorities and local communities have no way of influencing the decision making process.

Harbor complexes in the Gulf of Finland

Construction of new Russian ports (Ust-Luga, Primorsk and Vysotsk) and extension and modernization of existing ones (St. Petersburg seaport complex and Vyborg) contribute to an increased transfer of petrochemical products in the Baltic Sea. This in turn increases the risk of oil spills with well-known disastrous environmental impact. In case of such a spill there is no Russian nor international cooperation system that can give any sufficient response to such an incident. Effective decision making and means to handle such a situation are simply missing. A comprehensive environmental impact assessment of all these ports was never even considered.

Lack of infrastructure in coastal strip settlements (Kaliningrad area)

Along the coastal strip permanently inhabited settlements and areas with summer houses lack waste-water treatment and other infrastructure. Their sewage water goes untreated directly to the Baltic Sea. Transition of summer houses (dachas) to permanently inhabited homes adds to the problem. The coastal areas is so intensively used for recreation that it is buried in garbage, the forests surrounding the settlements are cut and trampled down while the sand dunes are completely destroyed. There is immediate need for waste water treatment and other sustainable infrastructure and the extension of settlements must, in the meantime, be halted or at least restricted.

Erosion problems on the Curonian Spit and Sambian Peninsula Coast (Kaliningrad area)

The Curonian Spit National Park with its extremely vulnerable coastal strip is visited by more than 200,000 people during the summer season. As a consequence of unregulated tourism and increasing storm activity erosion is a problem along the entire coast of the Kaliningrad region, and 35 % of the coast is exposed to sand slides and screes. Some 25 % of the beaches are not wide enough for coastal stability and about 10 % is exposed to permanent erosion. There is imminent need for control of the situation and the number of visitors in the areas must be regulated.

Estonian hot spots

Nature protection of coastal areas in the country is hampered by poor legislation. Decision making within other policy sectors fail to take into account values and requirements of nature protection. Detailed plans are more likely to focus on the interests of the developer rather than to follow general or thematic planning of other values in the coastal zone. In December 2008, however, new legislation was adopted by the government whereby the Action Plan for Nature Protection in Estonia was redrafted with the aim to align its requirements with international conventions and related policy sectors. The protected coastal strip in Estonia is 200 m wide.

Military shooting polygons (e.g. Nõva Bay)

Ten military shooting polygons are planned along the Baltic coast, e.g. on Nõva Bay between Dirham and Osmussaar, which is an important corridor for bird migration and also contains sensitive plant ecosystems (so called grey dunes and pine tree forests in the dune zone). Another plan is to use the tiny island of Uhtja where seal use to gather, as a watching area to control efficiency of shelling. These plans pose a significant threat to important Baltic nature conservation and to other recreational values.

Sindi dam on the Pärnu River

This dam, which is close to the city of Pärnu on the Baltic coast, is old and presently without any significant function. The dam however stops upstream spawning migration of salmon and sea trout and their access to the large catchment areas upstream. Despite this obstacle Pärnu River still harbors a threatened salmon population that should be protected and enhanced in number in future. Removal of the dam or building an open fish way past the dam would help the wild salmon population recover and the upstream parts of the river could again become an important river for recreational fisheries on the two salmonid species present.

Saaremaa Bridge

The Estonian Government is planning to replace the existing ferry connection between mainland Estonia and the island of Saaremaa with a 7 km long bridge. The site of this bridge is within the borders of the large Väinameri Important Bird Area. During the migration period more than 2 million birds fly across the Suur Strait. Among the birds that are protected by the EU Bird Directive Annex 1 species like the lesser white-fronted goose, smew and crane have been found in the area. The Suur Strait is also shallow and it is likely that the bridge will

disturb the strait's tidal flows and hence impact the seabed biota and other aquatic habitats. This effect will be enhanced further during construction time.

Small ports, e.g. Võiste

At present, Estonian laws do not require that small ports be registered, so they do not need to meet environmental management standards even though they normally give rise to significant loads of diffuse pollution. One such example is the Võiste terminal with a large number of owners. This terminal does not provide so called external services but is used by fishing vessels to a large extent.

Latvian hot spots

Coastal strip protection in Latvia is provided according to a Law on Protected Strips. All new construction including all types of infrastructure development is strictly limited within 300 m of special coastal protection strips in forests and dune areas, and within a 150 m margin in villages or settled areas. New construction in these areas is allowed only according to local special planning operations which also have to be approved by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Regional Development at the final stage.

House construction on the beach at Liepupe

Illegal parceling by the Liepupe municipality is violating building regulations and also violates regulations on coastal protection. A concrete example is when a fisheries tool shed is planned to be transformed into a summer house. The wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia owns this property, and she is eager to transform the building to a residential house. So far the State Environmental Service has refused to approve this transformation because it contradicts the requirements of the Law on Protected Strips.

Installations on the sand dunes in Jurmala

The Council of Jurmala township is planning a new construction site within the area of dune protection, thus demonstrating ignorance of public opinion which is clearly opposing the plan e.g. by organizing protest actions. The Council has already amended the town plan and in nature areas even envisaged commercial projects among which were construction on the dunes. In some cases the Ministry of Environment of Latvia has been critical of the plan and did not approve the amendments, referring to the requirements of the Law on Protected Strips. It seems as if development leading to damage of nature is an integral part of Jurmala town planning policy.

Unrestricted camping sites in Jurkalne

A private camping site – Sili – is located on the dunes in an area bordering on a shoreline cliff. This area is renowned for its beauty and is particularly vulnerable to erosion and human destructive activities. The town municipality owns the area of the site and is letting it out on lease to the campsite operator. Sadly though, the campsite operator allows destruction of the

area's nature values by allowing tourists to cut trees for firewood and to drive and park their cars in the dune area. In addition, the owner allows tent pitching outside the camping area and even on the edge of the cliff. Jurkalne municipality is not limiting these destructive activities and even increases the area they lease out for camping.

Illegal house constructions in Rucava (Pape Nature Park)

Within the borders of the Pape Nature Park and also on the coastal strip area several cases have been documented where construction has taken place without seeking and receiving necessary permits from the relevant State authorities. Land owners in the area tend to develop resort infrastructure in an uncontrolled way thus showing an ignorant attitude toward requirements of coastal protection like the Law on Protected Strips.

Lithuanian hot spots

Currently, the Lithuanian legislative system describes a coastal area as reaching 100 m inland from the water line, and out to a depth of 20 m. This entire area is state owned, unless land was private already before the coastal zone law came into force. In theory, no new construction can be built unless special permission is granted by authorities of local cities and national parks. In addition, these authorities can also decide on detailed management schemes for the coastal zone.

Butinge oil terminal

Butinge oil terminal is located close to the border with Latvia. It poses a severe threat to the Baltic Sea and particularly to the recreational beaches of Lithuania and Latvia, which are now and then affected by minor oil spills. Some spills and oil leakage take place without any notice by the oil company or ship that cause the spill, and because this coastal region is so sparsely populated a spill may become unnoticed in addition to unannounced.

Klaipeda harbor

Klaipeda harbor is located on the strait connecting the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon. The harbor has a large number of stevedoring companies, some of which are dealing with loading of oil, other petrochemical products and various toxic chemicals. These companies are vital contributors to the Lithuanian economy, which renders them a privileged position and also means that their negative impact on the environment is usually overlooked by local and national authorities.

A planned deep water port

A deep water port construction project is presently being planned in the vicinity of Klaipeda's most popular beach (Melnarage). This construction could change sand drift along the eastern Baltic seaboard, and in turn lead to further degradation of sandy beaches in adjacent coastal

areas. In addition, the recreational values of the Melnarage beach may diminish which will increase human pressure on remaining coastal areas some of which are Natura 2000 areas

Polish hot spots

Coastal strip protection in Poland stretches 100-200 m inland, depending on type of coastline. The protective belt, however, adds another ca 2 km inland from the coastal protection border. In some places it reaches as far as 5 km inland but in some urban areas the zone can be much narrower. Unfortunately, the law is not always adhered to, e.g. when building seaside promenades along the sea shore, and protection from erosion caused by coastal defence constructions is often missing. The total length of the Polish coast line is more than 800 km. It is estimated that more than half of the Polish dunes and coastal zone is devastated, and also 2/3 of the cliff shore zone. However, after the introduction of the Natura 2000 network things have improved a bit.

The channel through the Vistula Spit

The project of constructing a Vistula Spit Channel , near Krynica Morska, is planned as an alternative water way for Elblag harbor and will be completed by 2013. The project is solely based on national funding. No standard environmental impact assessment has been performed, but clearly the channel will influence water salinity and composition of the fish fauna in the Vistula Lagoon. Its ecosystem will undoubtedly undergo adverse changes and the attraction for recreational activities in the region will be reduced also by the noise and pollution from ships in the area surrounding the channel.

Construction of an artificial Marina Island

Near the Gdansk – Gdynia – Sopot area there is a plan to build an artificial island, full of entertainment activities, shops, cinemas etc. It is supposed to be built by 2012. The project will mainly be financed by EU funds. There is insufficient knowledge about its environmental effects and the responsible authorities have not heeded a warning from environmental experts nor have they acknowledged that the effects by this project may intrude on the environment of Natura 2000 areas.

Industrial animal farms

In Poland there are some 117 large-scale pig and/or poultry farms, all of which are part of the IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) scheme. Some of these farms are located in the area between Szczecin and Koszalin (Zachodniopomorskie region). These big farms were often operated during the period of Communism and afterwards privatized and taken over by large American and West European companies. Even if these farms hold integrated permits there are many instance of improper manure handling and storage, leading to over fertilization, large-scale phosphorus and nitrogen run-off and ultimately – eutrophication. It is also a common feature to lack transparency in the administrative process regarding these

farms, and indeed lack of access to public information about these installations and their negative consequences for the environment at large.

German hot spots

Within the two Baltic coastal states of Germany there is a protected coastal strip of from 100 m in width (Schleswig-Holstein) or 200 m (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) where all building is strictly forbidden. Even so, the overall situation is not satisfactory. Construction activities on the coast have unfortunately become much easier in recent years due to a changing attitude of planning authorities, and also changes in laws and regulations. In addition, widespread flood control practices still interfere with natural seashore environments.

Fehmarn Belt Bridge

This planned 19 km long bridge connecting the German island of Fehmarn and Denmark will have a four lane road and a rail connection between the two countries. The bridge, if built, will diminish inflow of saline water into the Baltic and may also pose a risk for shipping and migrating birds. The bridge project is strongly advocated by Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein, while Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and environmental NGOs raise strong concerns about it.

Lubmin Power Plant

A very big (1.6 GW) power plant is being planned on the southern shores of the Greifswald Lagoon. The cooling water discharges will drastically change much of the fragile lagoon ecosystem. There will also be detrimental impact on the Natura 2000 site which is an important breeding and resting area for birds.

Port Olpenitz

An enormous holiday resort, probably the largest in northern Europe, is planned adjacent to a number of nature protection areas on the mouth of the narrow Schlei Bight. There will be a harbor for 2,500 yachts, 1,000 holiday homes, 7,000 hotel beds and numerous other recreation facilities. These constructions will drastically impact today's quiet coastal strip and transform it into a huge new settlement with its sprawling activities which, no doubt, will impact existing natural environmental values of the surrounding areas.