



Malmoe, 23 October 2004

President of the European Commission

Rue de la Loi 200

B-1049 Bruxelles

BELGIUM

Re: Baltic Sea organisations statement on the objective 3 of the reformed cohesion policy from 2007 – namely the European Territorial Cooperation and on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

Dear Mr President,

The Baltic Sea organisations and structures:

Baltic Sea Seven Islands (B7)

Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC)

Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe- Baltic Sea Commission (CPMR-BSC)

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC)

present at the 4th coordination meeting of Baltic Sea Region organisations in Malmoe on 23 October 2004, would like to draw your attention to the fact that the cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region may be severely harmed if the limit of 150 km for maritime border is introduced.

Clarification

We welcome the objective 3 of the reformed cohesion policy from 2007 – namely the European Territorial Cooperation aimed to strengthen the cross-border and trans-national cooperation.

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We welcome the European Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in the period 2007-2013.

We support the Commission proposal to transform the three strands of Interreg III programme into the two following strands: cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation to be financed under the objective 3.

However, we strongly recommend a territorially decentralised management under this new objective. We specially underline the importance of the regional and local levels to be strongly involved in the implementation and administration of the structural funds. At the regional level, a clear responsibility for spatial development can be developed in close cooperation with the local level. Therefore, especially concerning territorial cooperation strands, decision on programmes and projects should be mainly a responsibility for the sub-national levels. The appropriate territorial groupings might be applied to both strands (i.e. groups of regions for cross border cooperation and groups of countries and regions for transnational cooperation) according to geographical proximity and traditions in cultural and economic cooperation. In this context we would like to maintain our Baltic Sea Region as cooperation area for cross-border and transnational strands benefiting from experience and mutual trust accumulated here.

We also support the concept of extending the scope and funding of the projects within both strands into investments in missing infrastructure which is necessary for improving the cooperation and spatial integration of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Baltic Sea is the only inland sea located (almost totally) within the European Union and thus it requires a special approach. This inland sea is characterised by the mix of old and new EU-members. Big differences exist here in terms of economic and social conditions. The economic development, trade and transport are expected to grow very fast in the coming years as result of the accession of the new EU-members. The proximity to the Russian Federation also requires special considerations. The need for intensive and concrete cooperation is therefore obvious, among other things to realise the Northern Dimension Having this in mind we are of the opinion that the maritime borders in the Baltic Sea Region should be treated in the same way as the land borders.

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The undersigned Baltic Sea organisations consider that the maximum distance of 150 km of maritime border - to be eligible to obtain funding for cross-border projects – is counter-productive to the very idea of this initiative and therefore we object to it. Our opinion is that in case of the Baltic Sea Region such distance can not be set definitely. We expect from the European Commission a more flexible approach taking into account (1) existing cooperation in various fields between the partners on both sides of maritime border and (2) historical, social, cultural and economical factors which justify cooperation across larger distance than mentioned above.

We can not imagine the situation where regions bordering through the Baltic Sea will be excluded from cross-border cooperation strand. It would seriously harm the cooperation in the Baltic Sea area and it would undermine our efforts aimed at achieving the balanced development and cohesion of this unique region once divided in two political systems, now united almost entirely in the European Union.

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