Green Paper Consultation

Green Paper on a future Maritime Policy for the EU
- comments from the Baltic Master project

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REGION BLEKINGE

Lead Partner

BalticMaster
maritime safety across borders

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Introduction

The Baltic Master Project welcomes the initiative to establish a European Maritime Policy and is much in favour of the integrated approach presented in the introduction to the Green Paper.

Baltic Master is an international project. Its aim is to improve maritime safety by integrating local and regional perspectives. The focus is on the Baltic Sea and issues concerning preparedness, prevention and marine spatial planning. The project is financed by the Interreg III B Programme for the Baltic Sea.

Baltic Master deals with maritime safety issues from a holistic perspective, aiming to improve and develop the role and potential of local and regional authorities. The key is to find integrated solutions based on common standards and far-reaching cooperation between stakeholders at different levels. The main objective is to define and develop forms of proper cooperation which reinforces and complements existing initiatives and structures.

Baltic Master has generated results and conclusions at a much needed concrete level answering such questions as:

- How does the maritime safety system actually function?
- What actions need to be taken in order to improve the state of the seas?
- How can different players form strategic cooperation and follow joint visions, strategies and plans of action in order to reach the same ultimate goal of a healthy, productive and safeguarded marine environment?

Baltic Master's focus is on the Baltic Sea and concrete measures primarily directed towards the local and regional levels. The project deals with maritime safety issues related to transport and the environment. Baltic Master has found that in order to increase maritime safety we must:

1. Improve the cooperation between all stakeholders
2. Set common standards
3. Develop new methods and tools for a sustainable use of the marine environment

This review of the Green Paper for a European Maritime Policy, prepared by the Baltic Master Project, is based on the findings made so far by the existing partnership of municipalities, regional governments, national authorities, universities and Pan-Baltic organizations. These are important findings which give concrete and specific suggestions to the role and potential of a European Maritime Policy.

1. Preparedness – When the accident has happened

Transport by sea is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years and with that comes a higher risk for accidents. This requires increased preparedness for preventing and managing a catastrophe. The Baltic Master project recommends a proactive preparedness rather than a reactive.

1.1 The local and regional dimension

In the event of a major accident, the coastal regions and communities will have to bear most of the consequences. Yet the regional and local players have very little influence on matters concerning maritime safety. Local and regional authorities should therefore be more involved when drawing up the on-land response scheme, exercising it and finally implementing the scheme.

Action

- Involve regional and local players in matters concerning maritime safety through consultations with national, supranational and EU authorities when developing strategies, goals and policies at the national and EU level.

1.2 Cooperation across borders

Experience from the Baltic Master project shows the importance of establishing good cooperation between sectors and different governmental players, but also to form strategic cooperation between countries in order to be able to work together more effectively. Cross-sectoral as well as cross-border contingency planning is a key issue for creating and sustaining a strong state of preparedness.

Example

The newly initiated cooperation between the Rescue Services of Ystad and Simrishamn in southern Sweden and the Regional Municipality of Bornholm in Denmark should be mentioned as an example of best practice concerning cross-border contingency planning. Each year approximately 45,000 vessels pass through the Bornholm strait. This dense traffic has already resulted in one oil spill and future accidents will affect both countries on either side of the strait. A high level of cooperation will be necessary to meet further increases in traffic and maintain safety.

Action

- Build strategic cooperation across sectors and countries. Focus on common contingency plans and exercises. The on-land, cross-border response cooperations should be coordinated by a specific organisation such as Helcom for example.

1.3 On-land response

When an accident occurs it is of major importance that the players involved are clear about the division of responsibility. To improve preparedness and on-land response, the players involved should take part in joint exercises and training in order to test their contingency plans and the effectiveness of their cooperation. Different types of scenarios should be created in order to test preparedness and educate the players involved in advance.

Example

In the region of Halland in the southwest of Sweden, the five coastal municipalities, the County Administrative Board and the Region have joined forces in developing and testing a regional contingency plan applicable for all stakeholders in the region. This is a perfect example of how municipalities should cooperate in order to be better prepared for larger accidents and threats.

Action

- Players in the coastal communities should test preparedness and practice it in advance.

1.3.1 Contingency planning

When an accident occurs, it is important to act quickly, thus giving a better chance to reduce the oil spill. A quick response requires updated contingency plans which should contain for example:

- A clear division of responsibility within the specific organization as well as between other relevant stakeholders
- Routines in case of an accident
- A description of the different phases of the response procedure
- A summary of regulations

Example

One major output from the Baltic Master Project is ‘Recommendations for local and regional preparedness’. These recommendations should be readily available for all local and regional organizations to use when developing their own contingency plans (preferably plans in cooperation with other authorities).

Action

- All coastal communities should have updated and tested contingency plans.

1.3.2 Volunteers and NGOs

It is of great importance not to forget nor neglect volunteers; they are an important and useful recourse in the clean-up operation. Experience from the Fu Shan Hai accident in 2003 shows that the most effective way to manage the volunteers is to give them proper tasks and training on how to clean up the oil. Non-governmental organisations also play an important role both as sources of volunteers as well as of knowledge and expertise.

Example
NGOs often have plans for dealing with oil spills and volunteers readily available for clean-up action. In cases of oil spills, for example the Fu Shan Hai accident close to the Danish island of Bornholm in 2003, the volunteers and NGO's have served as important manpower when cleaning the beaches and minimizing the consequences.

Actions
- Use volunteers and NGOs in the clean-up operation; teach them and give them proper tasks and develop strategies in the contingency plans for involving volunteers and NGOs.

1.4 Monitoring the environmental impacts

There is no doubt that an oil spill will have a negative impact on the environment, but are we aware to which extent?

Example
In order to determine the long-term impact of an oil spill, the region of Storstrøms in Denmark, has followed up and investigated the environmental impacts from the Baltic Carrier accident in 2001. In order to provide us with better knowledge and procedures, the environmental impacts of oil spills must be followed-up and monitored.

Action
- It is important to follow-up and monitor the environmental impacts from oil spills.

1.5 Calculating socioeconomic consequences

Naturally, a major oil accident at sea focuse most of the attention on the clean-up operation. In order to improve preparedness we need to widen the perspective.

Example
The Baltic Master project has carried out a socioeconomic study of a major oil accident. The study estimates the cost of the response work, the beach cleaning and the loss of income from tourism and fishery. The results show that tourism is the sector that suffers most; it is even greater than the cost for response and cleaning. Calculating the cost of an oil spill establishes the price paid by the community when oil reaches its shores. This should in turn generate an improved preparedness as well as preventive measures taken by the community to minimize the risk of accidents in its waters and also to minimize the consequences of an accident.

Action
- In order to improve preparedness, the socioeconomic cost must be taken into account both for the sake of prevention, but also to ensure proper documentation of the costs connected to the oil spill once it has happened.

1.5.1 Environmental costs

When calculating socioeconomic consequences we must not forget the cost for a polluted environment and lost ecosystems should also be calculated.

Example

The calculations of socio-economic costs of an oil spill should include the community's direct, indirect and passive costs. For example: How much does the loss of an ecosystem cost? What is the value of 10,000 sea-birds killed by oil? What is the long-term value for a community when tourism and the environment take years to fully recover after an accident?

Action

- Include direct, indirect and passive costs when calculating the socioeconomic consequences of an oil spill. This amount should be reclaimed from the polluter and the insurance companies. New standards for EU member states should be set and demanded.

2. Prevention – saving money and environment

It is quite clear and undisputed that maritime traffic is increasing significantly. In order to alleviate road and rail from congestion, marine transportation is marketed as a cheaper and better alternative. We need to take this increase in traffic seriously by developing and installing systems for safe transportation at sea. These systems should ensure that accidents will not happen and that chronic pollution connected to transport, such as illegal discharges, do not occur. We already have a major part of the legislation in place, but it needs to be actively enforced by the member states.

2.1 Vision of PSSA in the Baltic Sea

The Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) should be seen as a possibility to protect the Baltic Sea. The countries in the Baltic Region should work more progressively with the PSSA concept and develop new Associate Protective Measures (APMs) continuously. Similar work should be expected by other PSSA areas in Europe. More preventive measures have to be implemented and enforced.

Example

Developing the PSSA should take into account, for example, the numerous sensitive areas in the Baltic Sea, maritime traffic monitoring schemes, waste handling, etc. One important protective measure is the organization of a joint traffic monitoring scheme which includes surveillance and control as well as monitoring and steering of the vessels. The monitoring scheme should cover the entire Baltic Sea and rely on the same system for all states involved.

Action

- The countries around the Baltic Rim should work more actively with the UN classification of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. More preventive measures have to be enforced. For example, the numerous

sensitive areas in the Baltic Sea, maritime traffic monitoring schemes, ballast water and waste handling, etc. should be taken into account.

2.2 Motorways of the Sea

The planning of Motorways of the Sea (MoS) will facilitate the increase in marine transportation and thus create higher density and traffic congestion at sea. Planning themes such as MoS are mainly oriented towards growth, commerce and integration, but far too often do not put any emphasis on safety and the environment.

Example

It is important that a safety perspective is integrated into planning themes such as the MoS. The MoS should be developed as a true system for safe transportation and include:

- information on places of refuge along the MoS route
- clear and mandatory routes not interfering with sensitive areas and marine protected areas
- contingency plans for at-sea and on-land response along the MoS route
- systems for monitoring the vessel traffic
- functioning systems for sludge and waste handling as well as ballast water management in the MoS ports
- pilotage
- restrictions on emissions from ships and demands on environmentally-friendly transports.

Action

- Systems for safe transportation at sea should be developed parallel to the shift from land-based to sea-based transportation. Motorways of the Sea is one example of an initiative where such a system should be developed.

2.3 Increased Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) in the Baltic Sea

Traffic in the air is closely monitored to ensure the safety of planes and passengers. Similar systems and services are available for seaborne traffic. VTS offers 1) Information service; 2) Navigational assistance, and; 3) Traffic organization service. A VTS could consist of all or only parts of these three services. There is a need in the Baltic Sea for more VTS in order to assist, monitor and control the increasing traffic.

Example

In the Gulf of Finland, a thorough ship reporting system connected to VTS closely monitors the seaborne traffic. Smaller such services and systems are in place in other areas of the Baltic Sea. More VTS should be developed in areas with a high density of traffic.

Action

- Implement VTS in new areas of the Baltic Sea where the high density of traffic requires it.

2.4 Observing existing legislation

The maritime field does not primarily suffer from a lack of rules or legislations; the problem is rather the observance of them. Therefore, one field of action should be the implementation and enforcement of all existing regulations. The member states should be required to improve the observance of existing regulations.

Example – Sludge handling within the ports

Today ports use various equipment and standards for the handling of waste from ships. This makes it difficult to achieve efficient waste management. In order to reduce illegal oil discharges, it is important to ensure that vessels really empty their sludge tanks while in the port. The requirement that all ports should handle sludge and waste with no extra charge must be better enforced.

Actions

- The member states have to improve the observance of existing regulations.
- An improved sludge-handling and common standard within the ports is required as a step to reducing illegal oil discharges.

2.5 Places of refuge

The allocation and use of places of refuge are regulated in guidelines as well as in legislation. However, experiences from the Baltic Master project show that the various national interpretations of these regulations differ from state to state. When pointing out the places of refuge, it is also important to take into account the interest of the local communities. A bottom-up perspective should influence the procedure when pre-designating places of refuge. This approach should, however, be combined with a regional and supra-regional approach in order to determine the best places of refuge and secure a higher degree of preparedness and safety infrastructure in these areas.

Example

In the contingency plan for the Municipalities of Ystad and Simrishamn possible places of refuge have been pre-designated in case of a ship in distress.

Action

- Let a bottom-up perspective combined with a broader regional/supra-regional approach influence the procedure when pre-designating places of refuge.

2.6 Risk assessment

When trying to reduce the risk for accidents through preventive measures, navigation and construction of ships, risk assessment is an important prerequisite.

Example

There is a need for a macro-regional coordination of risk assessment in order to obtain a true picture of the risks in an area such as the Baltic Sea. A common coordinating body, possibly HELCOM, should be in charge of risk

assessment for the Baltic Sea in order for the proper decisions, taking the full picture into account, to be made. All Baltic Sea states should be involved in this work.

Action

- Establish a coordinating body in charge of risk assessment and covering the entire Baltic Sea. Such a body could possibly be Helcom.

2.7 European marine research networks and maritime education

Important aspects when trying to increase safety at sea are training, education and research. A majority of accidents at sea are linked to the human factor. Improved training and education connected to research and advancement in knowledge will prevent accidents from happening.

Example

For the Baltic Sea, macro-regional networks for marine research need to be formed and further developed. Similarly, common standards for maritime education must be set and enforced in order to improve safety.

Action

- The European institutes for higher learning and advanced research in the maritime field need to form stronger networks, cooperate more and also establish common educational standards.

3. Tools for protecting the marine environment

The marine ecosystem is fragile and under considerable stress. Human usage of the sea as well as environmental changes, such as climate change and species extinction, exerts tremendous stress on the marine environment. If we want to save the seas, we need to act now, but we lack the tools readily available for a realistic and sustainable management of the oceans, marine areas and coastal zones. We have to determine which measures need to be taken and how they can be implemented. In other words, how can we go from vision to action?

3.1 A stable environment is a condition for growth

There is a need to further explore the linkages between maintaining a good ecological state and at the same time generating economic growth and development.

Example

A sound ecosystem is a prerequisite for growth. An ecosystem which is already under considerable stress, such as in the Baltic Sea, will be more vulnerable to increased stress, for example climate change. In order to adapt better to the consequences induced by climate change we need to strengthen our Baltic ecosystems by reducing the stress it is already subject to. Thus, a reduction in emissions, oil discharges, run-offs from land, etc., has to be realized.

Action

- Calculate and reduce the stress already exerted on the marine ecosystems in order to strengthen them.

3.1 Marine Area Spatial Planning

In order to organize and develop the coastal zones and marine areas in accordance with a sustainable approach, the concepts of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Area Spatial Planning (MASP) need to be fully applied and implemented. Today, however, functional tools and methods are lacking and many local and regional as well as national authorities are uneasy with the subject. In many member states it is also very unclear which authority carries the responsibility for ICZM and MASP.

Example

In the Baltic Master project, we are working in parallel with developing a tool and manual for MASP while at the same time trying to implement the use of these techniques in one of the partner organizations. The municipality of Trelleborg in southern Sweden is carrying out a comprehensive analysis of its coastal and marine waters in order to; 1) detect conflicts and problems; 2) analyze the development when faced with external threats such as climate change, increased transportation and oil spills; and 3) find solutions for the long-term use of the coastal zone and marine waters.

The case study in Trelleborg is an example of how to define and structure the needs, conflicts and problems within the local authority in order to find solutions and minimize risks as well as environmental degradation. In other words to coordinate the economic, social and ecological needs and threats in the coastal zone in order to ensure a sustainable development.

Actions

- Functional tools and methods must be developed within the field of ICZM and MASP to be used by local and regional authorities.
- Common standards must be set concerning IZCM and MASP.
- Each member state should present a clear structure for how ICZM and MASP should be developed and implemented in the respective countries. This should include a clear division of responsibility.
- Cross-border cooperation in ICZM and MASP is needed with coordinated plans covering both sides of a border.

3.1 A common Environmental Atlas

A common Environmental Atlas would better link different sectors working with the coast and marine area as well as serve as a common interface between organizations in different countries.

Example

The environmental atlas should cover land, coastal zones and marine areas. Such an atlas should be applicable to local, regional and national level and should:

- Map sensitive areas

- Explore the linkages between contingency planning and ICZM/MASP
- Provide professionals and practitioners with the same tool for both cross-sectoral and cross-border use

Action

- An Environmental Atlas similar in scope between the different countries should be developed.

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