

Brussels, 26 November 2010

European Commission allocates €20 million to enhance environmental protection in the Baltic Sea region

The adopted action programme will support efforts concerning environmental protection and energy efficiency in the Baltic Sea region. The funding will concentrate on environmental projects with a cross border impact in the Russian and Belarusian part of the region. Actions will address pressing environmental issues such as e.g. the fight against hazardous substances and eutrophication. Furthermore, regional and local authorities in Member States and Russia and non-state actors are eligible for financial support; encouraging the development and transfer of innovative practices and demonstration projects in the environmental sector.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Commission Vice-President Catherine Ashton commented: *"It is important to promote sustainable development in The Baltic Sea Region. Its prosperity, safety and security are of great importance not only for direct neighbouring regions and countries but for Russia and EU as well. With today's decision we support our partners in their efforts to achieve these goals."*

Background:

There is a great potential for environmental protection and energy efficiency efforts in the Baltic Sea Region and this is also an opportunity to co-operate to achieve mutual gains and strengthen EU-Russian bilateral co-operation.

Based on an amendment by the European Parliament, this €20 million action programme is intended to finance activities to support the external dimension of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. Most of the activities and projects will take place in the framework of the Northern Dimension Policy. This policy was initiated in 1999 with the participation of Norway, Iceland, EU Member States and the Russian Federation and aims to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, to promote economic integration, competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe.

Additional information:

On the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/baltic/index_en.htm

On the Northern Dimension (ND) Policy:

http://www.eeas.europa.eu/north_dim/index_en.htm

On EU cooperation with Russia:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/country-cooperation/russia/russia_en.htm

On external relations EU-Russia:

<http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/>