Delivering a Sustainable Blue Growth Agenda for the Baltic Sea Region

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The Baltic Sea agenda for sustainable blue growth, adopted by the European Commission on 16 May 2014, provides a blueprint for harnessing the region's strengths to boost innovation and growth in the maritime area. Sustainability is an integral part of the plan as it can act as a driver for innovation and more jobs, like in the area of clean shipping.

The Baltic Sea region's specific characteristics provide it with the opportunity to combine responses to environmental challenges with extraordinary assets, such as competitive and innovative research and business sectors and a strong tradition of cooperation.

The document proposes:

- Consistent approach to innovations, increased sustainability.
- Innovation streams should cut across the areas, such as maritime technologies, biotechnologies, renewable energy, port reception facilities, maritime and coastal tourism including cruise industry, and aquaculture.
- Focus on the right skills and qualifications, cluster development.
- Better targeted funding to support maritime projects.
- This has to be implemented through multi-sectoral stakeholder dialogue, building on existing work, in full coordination with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region and making full use of available funding.

Growth and a healthy marine environment should go hand in hand. Sustainability is an integral part of the regional Blue growth agenda. Moreover, it should be seen as a driver of innovation and more growth and jobs. Clean shipping is one example of this.

The Commission is ready to facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Blue Growth Agenda in the Baltic Sea Region through a dedicated multi-sectoral maritime stakeholder platform. In the course of 2014-2015, the Commission in cooperation with stakeholders will organise a series of workshops dedicated to Blue Growth and funding opportunities in the Baltic Sea region.


Background:
The Blue growth study concluded last year ([more information available on Maritime Forum](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/node/3550)) reconfirmed that there is a huge potential for the development of maritime economy in the Baltic Sea region. Recent growth rates are above the growth average in the EU: offshore wind has increased in the region by 20%, cruise tourism by 11% and marine aquaculture by 13%. Short-sea shipping, coastal and cruise tourism, offshore wind, shipbuilding, aquaculture and blue biotechnologies are among the most promising sectors of the Baltic Sea maritime economy.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR) has been the EU framework for regional action in the Baltic Sea area for the past five years and its recently revised Action Plan has an important maritime component.

Some examples of successfully completed maritime projects include establishment of the Baltfish forum that is a pioneer in regional fisheries management, integration between maritime authorities across sectors and across borders through the successfully completed MARSUNO project, projects related to Clean Shipping, e-navigation and LNG, BONUS calls for clean tech and eco-innovations.

The Action plan of the EUSBSR contains further actions related to the blue economy, such as the "Submariner network" addressing sustainable innovative uses of marine resources (focus on aquaculture, blue biotech and wave energy), maritime related innovations ranging from maritime industries to renewable energy, enhanced cooperation in research and fisheries management, clean shipping and building competences on LNG, networking and clustering of maritime tourism stakeholders and preservation of maritime heritage, etc. All this is underpinned by a common approach for cross-border cooperation on MSP.

The focus on Blue growth could be further improved through strengthening the EUSBSR action plan in a number of areas. This could include new flagships related to offshore energy, aquaculture, blue biotechnology, maritime technologies, skills and cluster development.

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