Consultation process

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is based on a series of consultation:

- Consultation of EU Member States, regional and local authorities and stakeholders (inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, experts and representatives from the private sector) in the Baltic Sea Region (through many meetings, 2 conferences, 4 roundtables and official position papers presented to the Commission).

- Consultation of the public through internet. This consultation was launched on internet on 3 November 2008 and closed on 31 December 2008. The public consultation was supported by a scoping paper prepared by the European Commission presenting the main issues and the main questions.

- Consultation of 20 Directorates Generals of the European Commission which all contributed in their field of expertise.

Main results

The main results are the following:

Process

- In total 109 authorities, institutions or individuals responded to the consultation and presented their views. Out of these, 8 were Member States (every Member State presented a position paper), 3 non Member States (Russia, Belarus, Norway), 31 were regional and local authorities, 48 were inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, 19 were representatives from the private sector out of which 2 were experts / researchers and 3 were individuals.

- The expectations of the Member States and stakeholders are very high.

Governance

- The general view is that no new institution should be created at the level of the Baltic Sea Region, but that the existing ones should be somehow involved in the decision-making process as well as in the implementation process.

- Many stakeholders indicated that the decisions taken at the level of the Baltic Sea Region should be binding and that instruments to do so should be created.

- There is an understanding that there will be neither new Regulations nor additional funding from the European Union, although this would be desirable for several stakeholders.

- There is an overall agreement that there are merits in having the European Commission involved both in the design and implementation of a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
Priorities

- There is an overall agreement that the four objectives identified by the European Commission (‘to make the Baltic Sea Region an environmentally sustainable place’; ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region a prosperous place’; ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region an accessible and attractive place’; and to make the Baltic sea Region a safe and secure place) are indeed the main ones.

- Regarding the objective ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region and environmentally sustainable place’ the main priorities are the reduction of nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels, the preservation of natural zones and biodiversity, the reduction of the use and impact of hazardous substances, the limitation of the risk of oil spill pollution, the reduction of the pollution from the ships and the mitigation / adaptation to climate change.

- Regarding the objective ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region a prosperous place’ the main priorities are a better implementation of the single market, fostering of innovation, promotion of entrepreneurship, integration of the labour market (including education and training issues), improvement of connections with Russia, sustainability of fishing and good use of agriculture and forestry.

- Regarding the objective ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region an accessible and attractive place’, the main priorities are to end the energy isolation of the Baltic States, to improve the functioning of the energy market, to improve internal and external transport links, and to further promote tourism development.

- Regarding the objective ‘to make the Baltic Sea Region a safe and secure place’, the main priorities are the cross border law enforcement activities, the maritime surveillance and safety activities, the maritime accident response, the preparedness and response to storms and the response to major health threats.

Conclusion

The information and positions from the consultation process have been analysed by the European Commission and in general were taken onboard in the design of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.