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**AVIS DU COMITÉ DES ANALYSES D'IMPACT**

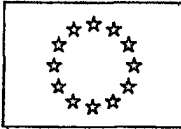
COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION AU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN ET AU  
CONSEIL CONCERNANT LA STRATÉGIE COMMUNAUTAIRE RELATIVE A LA  
REGION DE LA MER BALTIQUE

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT BOARD

Brussels, 02 AVR. 2009  
D(2009) 2672

### Opinion

**Title** Impact Assessment on: Proposal for an EU Strategy for the  
Baltic Sea Region - RESUBMISSION  
(draft version of 23 March 2009)

**Lead DG** DG REGIO

#### 1) Impact Assessment Board Opinion

##### **(A) Context**

In its conclusions of 14 December 2007, the European Council invited the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region to address the urgent environmental and other challenges related to the Baltic Sea. The Strategy will be presented to the European Council in June 2009 and will be one of the main priorities of the Swedish EU presidency during the second half of 2009. Implementation is planned to begin in 2010.

##### **(B) Positive aspects**

In accordance with Board's recommendations, the revised report has included an option which does not create an additional level of governance ("No additional structure"). It has broadly explained the motivation behind the selection of the individual challenges for the strategy, presented the concrete strategic actions to be taken (as set out in the Action Plan which accompanies the strategy) and showed the link between those actions and the problem definition, objectives and options. In addition, the presentation of the report has been significantly improved.

##### **(C) Main recommendations for improvements**

*The recommendations below are listed in order of descending importance. Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated in the final version of the impact assessment report.*

**General recommendation:** The Board's recommendations have been partially followed, and the evidence in support for a new initiative in this area should be strengthened further. In particular, the report still needs to demonstrate more fully the shortcomings in existing governance structures which a new initiative would address, including how they differ in policy areas with significant EU competences

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and in those areas where the EU role is limited to co-ordination. Secondly, the report should clarify the role third countries will play in the realisation of the strategy. Finally, it should provide a more balanced assessment of the options by analysing whether the preferred option could lead to a possible increase in organisational complexity and comparing the options not only against the effectiveness but also against efficiency criteria. Finally the evaluation and monitoring provision should be strengthened.

**(1) Analyse more systematically the shortcomings in existing governance structures.**

The Board's recommendation to analyse more systematically the weaknesses of existing governance structures related to non-implementation, non-enforcement, poor coordination, fragmentation of policies or unclear responsibilities has only partially been followed. In particular for the challenges under the themes "Climate change", "Internal market and trade with neighbouring countries", "Entrepreneurship, SMEs, human resources", "Agriculture, fishing and forestry", "Energy security, energy market integration and energy efficiency", "Attractiveness for citizens and tourists", "Maritime safety" the report should still provide concrete examples of non-coordination, fragmentation (including, where relevant, the lack of alignment of funding) and explain their adverse consequences. While the report has provided an analysis of the differences in the governance issues for the four key themes of environment, prosperity, accessibility and security, it should still discuss to what extent those issues differ for areas where the EU enjoys significant competences (such as fisheries, agricultural or internal market policies) and in areas where its role is limited to co-ordination and support (such as in innovation or employment policies) and, consequently, whether the preferred option ("Community approach, General Affairs Council and Commission") would be equally effective for both types of areas.

**(2) Clarify the role of third countries.** While the revised report has explained that cooperation with third countries would be sought (following agreement among Member States) through already existing frameworks (Northern Dimension, Eastern Partnership), it could provide further clarity on the role they will play in the realisation of the strategy.

**(3) Provide a more balanced assessment of options.** The revised report now consistently assesses the governance options against a set of uniform criteria, but could usefully make this assessment specific for each of the policy challenges. As regards the Board's request for a more balanced assessment, the scoring of the options should also be made for the criterion of efficiency in line with the preceding discussion about the impact on administrative costs. The Board's recommendation to assess how the creation of an additional level of governance would affect the roles and functioning of existing governance structures and whether it would increase the overall organisational complexity has only been followed by a very general statement at the end of section 5.2. While the revised report has described different types of costs to be borne by the Commission, it should be explicit whether other actors could also be exposed to costs (e.g. due to an additional reporting obligation).

**(4) Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation provisions** - potentially including a sunset clause. This could be helpful as the success of the strategy depends on the continuous motivation of the countries in the region to contribute to and to further develop this initiative.

**(D) Procedure and presentation**

It appears that all procedural requirements have been complied with.

**2) IAB scrutiny process**

Reference number	2009/REGIO/002 (Strategic)
Author DG	REGIO
External expertise used	No
Date of Board Meeting	Written procedure
Date of adoption of Opinion	<b>02 AVR. 2009</b> The present opinion concerns a resubmitted draft IA report. The first opinion was issued on 9 March 2009.

