

Governance in the Riga City to Protect the Baltic Sea

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The city of Riga lies on the southern part of the Gulf of Riga, on the estuary of the river Daugava, that provides the greatest part of fresh water inflow in the Gulf. The situation in the Gulf of Riga and farther in the Baltic Sea to a high degree depends on our policy. Due to the hasted colonisation policy after World War II there is lack of a correspondingly developed infra-structure and other consequences. For manpower that arrived after World War II, industry was created with little correspondence to the essential needs and resources of Latvia that resulted in a very deep economic crisis and deterioration of the environment at present. It was not long ago when the manner of governance here, as well as in other cities of the former Soviet Union was determined by the only centre - Moscow. Therefore the situation is principally different now.

The Riga City Council consists of 11 members, and one of them is responsible for environmental problems, including those connected with water - drinking water and sewage, recreation and fishery. We work together with the meteorological centre, health protection centre and Environment protection committee (now - ministry), that take care of inspections in order to warn and finally forbid polluters to continue their activities in case the allowed standards are exceeded. There is the Environment protection department and 4 municipal enterprises ("Riga gardens and parks", "Riga forests", "Water supply" and enterprise for deratization "Dezars") under our management. Situation changes, because many municipal enterprises are being privatized.

What we are doing or have already done: we have finished the first stage of the Riga waste water treatment plant with an output of 350 000 m³ a day and the total territory of 50 ha without emergency silt and sediment dumping areas. We hope it will solve also the problem of Riga resorts on the coast of the Gulf - for years there has existed an increased level of Coli bacteria (sometimes sanitary standard was exceeded more than 24 times). It will help to reduce also N and P content - eutrophication substances, as well as heavy metals, etc. Time to time there happen accidents outside Latvia, that have a heavy influence on us - so in 1991 from a factory in Buelorussia there was a great outlet of cyanides containing substances in the Daugava and we experienced problems with drinking water; this March instead of cyanides there were about 20 000 m³ of sanitation water. Therefore we think about ozonization of drinking water (now it is chlorinated). The Riga City Council, now and then, finds funds for the Institute of Biology of the Academy of Sciences for investigation of the water of the Gulf of Riga. Another source of pollution of the Gulf of Riga is the atmosphere, therefore we have organized an air monitoring system in the city with the help of our twin-city Norrköping.