

COALITION CLEAN BALTIC - A NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NGO'S IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

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The Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world. One of the reasons for this being the 80 million people living in the area around the Baltic Sea, whose pollution is transported by rivers to the sea. At the same time pollutants transported by air from Scandinavia, England, the Continent of Europe and Eastern Europe are deposited in the Baltic Sea. Every year the Baltic Sea receives hundreds of thousands of tons of nutrients, thousands of tons of poisonous heavy metals and hundreds of tons of other poisonous substances from industries, municipalities, agriculture and traffic.

Co-operation for a cleaner Baltic Sea

Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) was established in February, 1990 by environmental non-governmental organisations in the countries bordering the Baltic Sea in order to cooperate on the protection of the Baltic Sea environment. CCB is a network for co-operation and co-ordination between NGO's in the Baltic Sea Region so as to strengthen the capacity to reach the overall goal of improvement and protection of the Baltic Sea environment and its natural resources. The CCB is a politically independent, non-profitmaking association and has 25 member organisations.

CCB strives towards reaching a sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Area. CCB is through its member organisations and secretariat operating in different ways. To create an ecological sustainable society CCB see the importance to work on different levels and in several ways at the same time, linking the different levels together to reach the overall goal.

The work of CCB

CCB is following and influencing the political process at the local, national and international level. CCB is functioning as the joint contact and lobby organisation for the member groups towards intergovernmental organisations concerned with the Baltic (primarily the Helsinki and Gdansk Commissions) and developing and presenting joint NGO proposals and demands to be put up to these intergovernmental organisations. The Environmental Ministers in the Baltic Sea Region have decided to develop and Agenda 21 (Baltic 21) for this region, which should be ready until spring 1998. CCB is participating in the Senior Officials Group (SOG) who are responsible for developing the Baltic 21. This is a good example how NGO's and the governments can cooperate to try to reach the common goal of a sustainable environment. A CCB - NGO Vision for an Agenda 21 in the Baltic Sea Region has been developed as a joint project of its member groups and presented to the Environmental Ministers in October 1996.

Information about activities (like seminars, conferences, projects etc.) going on in the Baltic Sea Region of relevance to CCB member organisations, is gathered and distributed. A task for CCB is also to gather, distribute and produce information about environmental problems in the Baltic Sea Area. An important part of the work for CCB and its member organisations is to increase the public awareness and knowledge in issues concerning the Baltic Sea. A CCB Newsletter is published and issued four times a year. In order to strengthen the work of the member organisations CCB is giving financial and organisational support to the member organisations in need of such support.

The role of NGO's

To have active NGO's is a part of a democratic society. An important role for NGO's is to analyse the decisions-makers, authorities etc. and inform the public and media when measures are taken, that contradicts for a better environment. Environmental NGO's should act as watchdogs for the policies of governments, and study in what respect policies and investments really will lead to a better environment. Lobbying governments to implement the declarations they have signed on reductions of pollution's etc. is another important task, as governments usually sign declarations for a better environment, but don't put in too much energy or interest for the implementation.

It is essential to have independent environmental NGO's to keep an eye on the government and on the political decisions taken, but NGO's should not be seen as an enemy to fight - instead it is important to see them as a resource to be used for a better environment. One of the roles of CCB is to cooperate with the governments and governmental authorities in order to speed up and improve the environmental solutions for the Baltic Sea.

NGO's have the unique possibility to act as a link between ordinary people, authorities and decision makers. CCB also see the importance of linking different groups of the society as e.g. students, teachers, farmers, industry, authorities, press and media, politicians and NGO's to discuss and find solutions for specific environmental problems. When co-operating we can create an environmentally friendly and sustainable society. Creating public awareness and increasing the knowledge of people about environmental issues is a big task for the environmental NGO's so as to engage more people in the work for a better environmental situation , e.g. to increase the pressure for a better environmental legislation and a good assortment of environmentally friendly products in the shops.