

Answer to Call for Public Consultation by Eva Salevid,

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## *The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region requires the European Landscape Convention*

### **Synthetic response on the general framework:**

Europe collaboration processes in Dobris, such as the Dobris Assessment<sup>1</sup> just as the Aarhus Convention of Denmark in 1998, have both demonstrated that landscape protection covers, by far, many more hectares of land throughout the European countries than do nature reserves or other categories. This is one of the reasons why this Answer would like to focus much more on **"cooperation in other areas"** and on **"social" (participatory)** levels than does the present text of the Strategy. I see these levels as being more linked to the necessary **cultural development** of the BSR in the future – highly needed. A European convention of the Council of Europe, the *European Landscape Convention* (ELC)<sup>2</sup> could be a key document in the forthcoming development of the Region, since it has already been ratified by most BSR countries, being also members of the EU, except for Sweden, (which has however signed it), Estonia and Germany. A key priority relating to all **four action-oriented objectives of the Strategy** should thus be: ratification and implementation of the ELC by all BSR states.

### **Synthetic response on 'To make the BSR an environmentally sustainable place':**

In my view the main environmental (in a broad sense of the word) challenge will be to include landscape perspectives among the Region's other environmental objectives. This will probably not be easy in view of the strong ecological consciousness within the region and can perhaps only be done in a perspective of widening and integration (rather than replacing and isolation). However, if Sweden will soon ratify the ELC, and so it seems, an enormous step forward would be taken if Germany, too, among the BSR countries of the EU would also do so. This country could then easily assume the role of leading key player of the BSR, which, in this landscape perspective, would benefit European cohesion at large. Anyhow, it should be a priority, in the BSR process, to take actions in such ways as to find models of giving-and-taking including all countries around the BS, instead of trying to impose primarily one model, as seems still to be the case. Furthermore, around the BS

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<sup>1</sup> Stanners & Bourdeau, 1995

today, landscape in a both natural and cultural aspect is not yet targeted so as to give the maximum to what the ELC, writes of in terms of European landscape research, etc. Indeed, the ELC has a strong unifying potential, as both a vision and a strategy, which should be made use of.

### **Synthetic response on 'To make the BSR a prosperous place':**

The liberalization of the market urgently claims - in view of the present crisis of the finances- to much review ways in which the competitiveness of the BSR and related problems could be looked upon in new, "cultural" ways. More emphasis should be made on finding means of cooperation and competitiveness in "soft" areas, like culture, and far less on harsh forms of over-exploitation, for instance of fishing resources. One, essential way of obtaining this could be to review the no 98/2002 of **Naturoopa**, a magazine of the Council of Europe. It was entirely consecrated to the European Landscape Convention. For instance, we learn that it was the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, CLRAE, in 1994, which first put forward some experiences around regional development of three Regions in the Mediterranean, in Spain, France and Italy, on a landscape basis in order to develop natural and cultural landscapes. More could probably be learned from these experiences, in a more pan-European, less scientific/ideological way in order to achieve a greater spatial and sustainable prosperity in the BSR. Also around the BSR **landscape plans** (where **climate** issues are today highly ranked) could probably create considerably more sustainable jobs, for instance in the area of protecting and developing natural resources. Thus, the ELC has a whole set of visions and tools for how to promote regional development on a landscape basis at the same time as increasing **services**. This should be much needed in a Region where already countries like Poland and Latvia have reached far in this respect - whereas others, like Sweden, have reached far in services relating to climate issues. Such complementarities should be more encouraged. A problem is that in the Baltic Sea Region of Europe as a whole, the landscape is far less recognized as a value than in continental Europe, probably for reasons of low demography and historic rivalry between languages and cultures around the BS. In some cases we have only got to know each other through the ancient wars... Thus, remaining **barriers for trade** in the Region would seem to relate much more to these circumstances than in the South. Sustainable prosperity in the long run thus seems here much more heavily dependent on the readiness of such age-old cultures and nationalisms to open up towards each other. Certainly, the putting in place of the ELC, as a firm structure, could help, indeed...

### **Synthetic response on 'To make the BSR an accessible and attractive place':**

If the four general action-oriented objectives of the Baltic Sea Strategy might win on giving a larger emphasis on many cultural aspects of the landscapes of the Region, this is not to say that their order (from 1 to 4) with a priority towards environmental sustainability should be wrong. It is merely to say, that placing Culture and Education on the third, instead of the

first place, may root certain age-old problems of this Region. These are related to the poverty and Puritanism of past ages, especially in the western parts. In the past, due to sometimes continual disasters of war-fare, primarily between Denmark and Sweden, there was a long history of under-estimation of the cultural processes. However, given the basic facts of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, (“*brackish, shallow water; forests; cold winters; (---) territorial pattern of the whole area (...) very imbalanced*”, etc) these should be seen as arguments for a more culturally-oriented policy, that would be used to bypass some of these natural disadvantages. Indeed, the attractiveness of the region in terms of “*infrastructure and services (transport, energy, health, education, culture and tourism)*” thus seems even more dependent on deliberate strategies in order to pass beyond ancient habitual conflicts ( known as the “*Jante Law*”). Here, too, by the introduction of cultural strategies, like **public participation**<sup>3</sup>, the ELC has a lot to give in the Region. The Convention and its relating documents all express a concern for the participation of the **citizens**<sup>4</sup> . So does the EU - especially if the Lisbon Treaty will be finally ratified. Thus, in order to give more attention to more creative-democratic solutions/topics, I believe that the term “**landscape**”, just as the term “**participation**” could be used more frequently in the founding texts of the BSR. Indeed, the vast **natural resources** of the BSR, although mainly unexploited in some areas, could be turned to a powerful potential in the sense and direction of the ELC. Long-term **protection/management/planning** – the three main key notes of the ELC – ought to be actively introduced in the BSR process. However, the EU-Commission itself probably needs to become more engaged in these issues - in the interest of all the citizens of Europe. And this, as I said, not in the least because of the specific historical reasons of the Region...

### **Synthetic response on ‘To make the BSR a safe and secure place’:**

Often, the Nordic countries during history have taken great notice of security issues and they have indeed passed on quite a few to other European states as well. As has been pointed out by Swedish psychiatrist David Eberhard in an often cited book of debate, structures to meet new safety requirements are often well developed. Collaboration concerning: organized crime, police or judicial cooperation, the fight against xenophobia, etc. can follow the claims of the Strategy, that’s all...

### **Synthetic response on governance issues:**

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<sup>3</sup> See T-FLOR 3 (2004) 6, by Mr Michel PRIEUR, Expert of the Council of Europe and Mrs Sylvie Durousseau, Dr in Public Law, in “Joint meeting of the Cultural Heritage Steering Committee (CDPAT) and the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP) at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg: comparative study of legislation on public participation in landscape matters in the context of the implementation of the European Landscape Convention”

<sup>4</sup> Naturopa 98/2002, ( see for instance text by the above Michel Prieur)

There is, from a citizen's perspective, however, a great need for better policy design in the BSR. Because of the many different "ownerships" of environmental concerns in a broad sense, it is urgent that the various states do manage to get beyond their own national interests or habits, in order to be able to develop the BSR more efficiently. Perhaps HELCOM could be a forum for this, if works with landscape issues? I don't know! However, I do believe that the proposal by some Swedish Authority Representatives during a national Landscape Conference in February 2006<sup>5</sup>, that there is a need for an **ELC-Secretariat** in Sweden, is a good proposal (given Sweden soon ratifies the Convention). Such a secretariat should then develop in order to cover the whole of the BSR. *The Landscape Convention*, today ratified by five out of the eight Baltic Sea Region and EU States, should be seen as a natural coordinator. Besides, I believe that the use of **modern languages** in the area should be reconsidered and measures be made to facilitate future collaborations between nations/regions in the area also on other grounds than the knowledge English alone: both **English**, **German** and **French** should be more commonly used in the BSR policy documents context – for the reasons, mentioned above, of transcending the various traditions of the Baltic Sea States during the past and for more cohesion within the EU. In documentation work during the BSR process it should be more frequent to encourage **professionals from the humanist and historic fields** to take their places at the side of ecologists. Small- and medium sized enterprises should be more encouraged compared with the mostly large-scale businesses today. The latter are not always able to ensure long-lasting attraction/prosperity - see the current crisis... Lets have more "best practices" from all of the EU countries spread in the North on matters such as **local/regional development & public participation**. Let's have a less of the too simple "trial-and-error"-attitudes. In a period of "Change", let's also in the Baltic Sea Region, dare a bit more of abstract thinking in the interest and name of the citizens: Hasn't this *bleakish* – yet naturally attractive - Region waited long enough?

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<sup>5</sup> See on <http://www.raa.se>, papers concerning conference organized by the Swedish Heritage Board: "Den Europeiska landskapskonventionen – dags för implementering!" (in Swedish)