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REPORT

ON

**ENVIRONMENTAL CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
IN THE EASTERN BALTIC REGION**

(Rapporteur: Mr Markku Pohjola, Finland)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

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INTRODUCTION

The CLRAE Committee on the Natural and Built Environment decided, early in 1993, to prepare a report on "The Environment in Central and Eastern Europe: the Role and Responsibilities of Local and Regional Authorities".

Although the distinction is somewhat artificial, the Committee decided to divide the report into two sections:- one relating to the environment in the Eastern Baltic region and the other for all Central and Eastern European countries other than the Eastern Baltic riparian states.

The Committee appointed as Rapporteur for the Eastern Baltic region report Mr Markku Pohjola (Finland) and, for the report for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe Mr Arpád Molnar (Hungary).

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For the current report on the Eastern Baltic riparian states, prepared by Mr Pohjola, the starting point for obtaining much of the material was a conference held in Helsinki in September 1993 on "Co-operation between local authorities in the Baltic region" - a conference organised by the Finnish Association of Local Authorities.

The report is basically in two parts:- (1) an account of local authority policies for the environment in the countries in question and (2) information on mechanisms for co-operation between local authorities in the region.

For Part I, the chapter headings are the same as those used for the CLRAE report on Municipal and Regional Environment Policy in Europe [CPL (28) 5, Part II], adopted at the CLRAE Plenary Session in 1992, prepared by MM Harman and Manaos. These chapter headings are printed as an appendix to the report.

The report is based principally upon answers received from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Similarly, the conclusions refer principally to these countries. For Russia, some material was received from the Union of Russian Cities. This material has also been incorporated.

The information received from Poland, although geographically falling under the natural ambit of the current report prepared by Mr Pohjola, has been included in the report on the other Central and Eastern European countries prepared by Mr Molnar.

The Rapporteur, Mr Pohjola, would like to thank the Association of Finnish Local Authorities for having coordinated the collection of material for this report.

A. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EASTERN BALTIC REGION

1. Local authority responsibility and activities for environmental protection

a. Water supply system

Water resources have been considered to form the state water resources in Baltic states. The practical situation differs greatly from small to bigger municipalities. In **Estonia** municipalities produce and distribute water in cities. Authorisation, supervision and control of the use of water is the responsibility of municipalities and regional governments.

In **Lithuania**, water is supplied by state water supply enterprises which, as a rule, are subordinated to a municipal/regional government, but in rural areas water supply is performed by local municipal service boards subordinated to a regional government. Authorisation, supervision and control of the use of water is the responsibility of the state authorities, in practice through their regional agencies.

In **Latvia**, municipalities produce and distribute drinking water to households and businesses. Permits are issued by state regional agencies.

In **Russia**, there are municipal boards responsible for water supply. Some of them are becoming joint stock companies. In general, federal and regional authorised bodies (Federal water resources service and subordinated to Federal Water Resources Service river basin boards) supervise and control water resources.

b. Water protection, waste water management

Waste water treatment does not function properly in Baltic countries. The sewage system is insufficient, overloaded, and poorly maintained and operated.

In **Estonia**, authorisation for waste water discharge into bodies of water is the responsibility of municipal and regional local authorities. In **Latvia** authorisation belongs to the competence of state regional environmental protection committees (EPCs), although waste water permits must be approved by a municipal government.

In **Lithuania**, local authorities plan and supervise waste water discharge. In cities, local municipal boards can impose fines on enterprises releasing unpurified waste water into public sewage network or open water basins. Unfortunately, at the moment, these fines are much lower than installation expenses of waste water treatment equipment. Water protection is performed by an obligation to install water purification equipments which, due to big investment or reconstruction costs, is not carried out. Municipal waste water plants are run by local authorities. Operational costs are divided between municipal budgets and the Environmental Protection Fund.

c. Waste management and recycling

In **Estonia**, local self-government bodies of municipalities and cities have up until now only been a little engaged with refuse and recycling. These issues have belonged to the competence of previous county governments, though local self-government bodies of bigger cities are active in these fields. In the City of Tallinn, waste management and recycling is the responsibility of the Communal Board; sanitary conditions in the city and the dump site are supervised by the Office of Health Protection; waste management is supervised by the Environment Board.

In **Latvia**, municipalities and regions are in charge of collecting and disposing of waste, but only regions and bigger cities have more advanced waste treatment plants.

In **Lithuania**, waste management is a responsibility of every municipality. Municipal environmental departments control state companies or private businesses in charge of the task. Due to low levels of technology, methods of waste management such as incineration and fermentation are not applied in Lithuania. There are some plans to start waste recycling in several cities and regions.

In **Russia**, specialised municipal departments are responsible for the collection and recycling of wastes. This problem is very urgent for Russia.

d. Disposal of toxic waste

The primary policy-making authorities are regional governments or central governments and their agencies. In Tallinn in **Estonia** the utilisation of luminescent lamps and incineration of oil wastes has begun, and also, the collecting of small batteries. In **Lithuania**, private businesses do the work under the supervision of the Centre of Hygiene and local environmental committees.

In **Latvia**, according to the Draft Law on Hazardous Waste, all activities involving hazardous wastes including production, transport, treatment and disposal will be allowed only after notification has been submitted to the municipal authority (acting in co-operation with a regional EPC) and the appropriate permit has been issued. Municipal government, in co-ordination with the EPC, will be given the authority to determine a location for regionally significant hazardous waste treatment and disposal facilities. Permits for the transport of hazardous waste will be approved by EPCs. Municipal government institutions will be empowered to enforce compliance for a timely submission of notifications, permit requirements, payment of obligatory environmental charges, and compliance with waste collecting and transport plans.

e. Control of chemicals

The question of chemicals seems to have been understood as a problem of agriculture in the Baltic countries. Local authorities have no responsibility in the control of chemicals, except in **Lithuania**, where chemical use/discharge is controlled by use of a discharge permit which every business has to submit to the relevant municipal department.

f. Protection of air quality:

Monitoring of air quality is mainly the responsibility of central governments with their regional agencies. In **Estonia**, the protection of air quality in Tallinn is the responsibility of the Environmental Board. In **Lithuania**, the technical control is carried out by both the municipal and the state bodies. A permit procedure is in use, the issuing authority being the regional authority.

Thermal boilers are considered to be a great problem. The problem is worsening because of the natural gas shortage. In **Latvia**, all major thermal power plants are being required to install filters for sulphur dioxides and nitrogen oxides. However, the capital required may not be available.

In **Russia**, cities have nature conservation committees, which are responsible for air control. City nature conservation committees and sanitary inspection services have the right to impose fines on polluting enterprises and even to close them down.

Reference is made simultaneously to sanitary inspection services (SIS) and to nature conservation committees (NCC) because SIS are responsible mainly for air pollution control both in industrial and residential areas. Organisations subordinated to Russian Federal Hydrometeorological and Environment Monitoring Service are responsible for air quality monitoring.

g. Noise abatement

Noise abatement is realised mainly by creating green areas and organising the traffic.

h. Energy saving and new environmentally "friendly" energy resources

The energy crisis and environmental impacts of energy consumption are one of the main problems in Baltic states. Energy conservation is a national question in all these countries. The local level is also active in implementing energy conservation targets. In **Estonia**, an energy conservation programme was elaborated and approved in 1992. After the Estonian Government, realisers of the programme are ministers and local self-government bodies. The energy conservation programme for the City of Tallinn is in a stage of elaboration.

In **Lithuania**, such institutions as the Kaunas Institute for Physical and Technical Problems of Energy Research develop alternative energy sources. Small scale private initiatives like wind power stations, and wood and straw burning are supported by local authorities. Possibilities to exploit local geothermal ground water reservoirs are also sought.

i. Traffic management, particularly in terms of environmental protection

In the Baltic states, traffic problems and air pollution caused by motor vehicles have not reached such levels as in Western European countries. Public transport services in cities are relatively well organised. But the situation is changing rapidly. Cities in the Baltic states seem to aim at solving these problems with technical measures of organising traffic, such as ring roads, green wave - systems and parking fees. In **Lithuania**, some cities are discussing means to limit the traffic in central parts of cities and using non-polluting public transportation.

j. Nature and landscape protection

Local authorities develop, maintain and control public green areas. Nature and landscape protection is mainly the responsibility of the state.

2. **Methodology**

a. Division of responsibilities and authority in environmental protection between local, regional and national authorities

In **Estonia**, the Ministry of the Environment carries out big national or regional projects and programmes, general planning of regions and administrative units, creating of national parks, mining etc. The Ministry of the Environment has no regional agencies.

In the rest of the cases the expertise is carried out by local environment boards. In 1993 the Estonian Parliament passed a new Local Government Act where the hitherto existing two-level local government system (county -municipality/city) was replaced by a one-level system (municipality/city). The procedure of approving permits for the use of natural environment and resources has to be reorganised. Up to now, only some municipalities and cities have established corresponding offices. Environmental boards can be found in a quarter of the municipalities.

Latvia's central environmental authority was the Environmental Protection Committee (EPC) which was established in 1990. After parliamentary elections in 1993 the EPC was transformed and integrated into the new Ministry of Regional Development and Environment. It is expected that considerable changes will continue in the administrative structure in the near future. The Law on Environmental Protection was adopted in 1991. The following information is based on the old structure with the EPC as a central environmental authority.

The functions of nine regional EPCs include permit control, monitoring, enforcement and liaison in co-operation with the Hydrometeorological Agency, which is responsible for meteorological, hydrological and environmental data. The regional EPCs are responsible for the majority of tasks such as the issuing of permits and enforcement.

Despite the centralised administrative structure of environmental protection, local self-government bodies still have several duties and rights to influence these matters. Water supply, sewage management, waste management, recycling and heating plants are under the direct management of municipalities. Nature and landscape protection, physical planning and permit procedures for building are also connected with municipal administration.

Laws on Rural Municipalities and on Town Municipalities state that municipal self-governments have a right to confirm regulations and to provide for administrative liability dealing with, for instance, the maintenance of municipal land, forests, water, and specially protected natural and cultural objects; weed eradication, chemical and mineral fertilizer use and storage on municipal territory; maintenance of sanitary cleanliness in inhabited areas; organisation of public services and facilities in inhabited areas, green belt maintenance, general water use and landscape protection.

Local authorities are organised to establish special political committees to supervise and control environmental problems in their territories. Such committees have deliberative functions for local and regional councils and serve as institutions to pay inhabitants' and local administration's attention to local environmental problems. Some local authorities have established laboratories and similar institutions to control the situation in their territories. The Law on Regional Self-Governments states that a regional council has a right to confirm regulations and to provide for administrative liability for their violation.

In **Lithuania**, at present, the functions and practical work in the field of environment protection are not distinctly divided between municipal and regional authorities and the national government (the State Department for the Environment Protection). No Ministry exists for the Environment.

By legislation, there is a big difference in competence reserved for municipal/regional environmental bodies and for regional agencies of the State Department for Environmental Protection. The law does not empower the relevant municipal bodies (usually departments for environmental protection) to use any legal sanctions or to impose fines on businesses and individuals violating the law. This function is the responsibility of the regional state agency.

In major cities the municipal environmental departments act more or less independently and co-operate with the state regional agencies. Nevertheless the functions of these two administrative bodies sometimes intertwine to a larger scale and leave both of them with a strong desire for a more perfect legislation.

The picture is very much different when examining interaction of the regional local authority and its counterpart - regional state agency. The state agency is empowered by legislative means and administrative resources to issue permits, implement planning and survey the main environmental objects in a region. Despite the new functions reserved for the regional government bodies their task, to a large extent, is limited to consulting, advising and co-operating with the regional state agency to implement the national projects. All the necessary information i.e. territorial water pollution, drinking water quality etc. is supplied by the regional state agencies.

In **Russia**, there is no federal body (department) which is responsible for landscape protection in Russian cities. Nature and landscape protection is of the state's responsibility in general. As it concerns cities we propose the next formulation for Russia: "In Russia head city architects and architectural organisations developing general plans are responsible for nature and landscape protection in cities". In spite of that, the conception of urban landscape is mentioned in some architectural normative documents in practice, it is not realised even for protected historical, green and cultural areas".

b. Permit procedure

In **Estonia**, the Law on the Use of the Natural Environment and Resources was adopted in 1989. According to the law the use of the natural environment and resources is arranged by an agreement between an executive body of local government and the user. In 1991 the Estonian Government decided that the procedure of administrating the natural environment and resources is a competence of an executive body of municipalities and cities. To the competence belongs a right to give sanctions on permits concerning the use of natural resources adopted by a (previous) nature protection office of a county, a right to present special terms for the permits, to approve permits for peat production in marshes smaller than 100 ha etc.

On January 1991 the Estonian Government determined a temporary procedure of delivering permits for the use of the natural environment and resources. For example, a permit for the use of mineral water supplies is delivered by the state Water Board with an accordance of the Ministry of Health and Labour and with an environmental protection office of a county. The procedure of approving permits for the use of the natural environment and resources at a local level is being re organised.

In **Latvia** an application for all environmental permits is made to the regional EPC. The main focus of the permitting process is an environmental impact assessment. Data and information prepared by the investor for the EIA application provide a basis for necessary permits e.g., emissions to air, water use and discharge.

There are two types of permits available: temporary permits and regular permits. For smaller activities a temporary permit can be issued quickly. For larger activities a hazardous substance pollution level is analyzed. If the facility does not conform to the standards or is located in an area that does not conform to quality standards (e.g. Riga, Ventspils), a temporary permit will be issued for one year. The permit for the following years will reduce pollution progressively until the standards are reached. Measures to reduce pollution are determined in the permit documents. Operating without a permit or a breach of permit regulations can lead to administrative fines, closing facility, permit withdrawal or criminal sanctions.

To start a new industrial activity of local significance, a permit from the local municipality is necessary. For an activity of national significance an additional permit from the Government is needed. A regional EPC determines whether a planned activity is of national significance.

In **Lithuania**, in order to get a registration permit from a regional State Department for Environmental Protection, every business is required to fill out forms which specify in detail land use, production, means of transportation, raw materials, use of natural resources, pollutant discharge into the municipal sewage network, air pollution, waste etc. In a separate form the business has to describe environmental protection means, including utilisation of waste, sewage treatment, new technologies etc. Finally, the business has to describe the risk level and the foreseen means of disaster elimination. Along with these forms the authorisation for natural resource use and the discharge permit are to be enclosed. In major cities the latter has to be agreed and approved by the relevant body of the local authority.

In **Russia**, a licence to use natural resources is delivered by state authorities. In cities, enterprises and organisations need a permit from CNCC concerning the use of nature, wildlife, utilisation, dumping storage of industrial and domestic wastes, discharges of pollutants.

c. Physical and environmental planning

In **Estonia**, land use planning has been a responsibility of the state at the local level. The restoration of the local self-government system began in 1989 with the adoption of the Local Government Act, which determines as one of the responsibilities of local self-government bodies the observance of environmental protection, the control of businesses located on their administrative territory, the supervision of the use of land and natural resources. Physical planning in Tallinn is the responsibility of the Board of Physical planning; environmental planning of the Environment Board.

In **Latvia**, the control of land use planning is undergoing significant change. In future, local planning is to be carried out by local governments (regional and municipal) in consultation with appropriate state authorities.

In **Lithuania**, physical planning of individual environmental objects is carried out by following the requirements of local councils (in cities) and those of the State Department for Environmental Protection (in regions). In regions, local authorities usually make orders and co-ordinate the planning. Competent departments of local authorities are in charge of land restitution and exploitation projects. In cities, environmental planning is run through specialised programmes: water, waste, greenery etc., which have to be approved by a committee of the local council (Municipal Committee for Ecology and Public Utilities) and implemented by the municipal departments (Municipal Department for Environmental Protection).

In a majority of regions this work is incorporated into the privatisation programme and is dealt with local bodies of land exploitation. Since state and collective farms have been dissolved along with public utility facilities local authorities had to take over all the responsibilities and inherit all the problems of their exploitation.

d. Financial mechanisms, local resources and capacity to carry out environmental responsibilities

In **Estonia**, the "polluter pays" principle is in use. Taxes for the use of natural resources and emissions are collected in the National Environmental Fund and the Waste Management Fund with their regional departments to finance corresponding projects. Half the fees are used nationally and half of them locally. Local governments do not have the necessary resources to carry out all their environmental responsibilities.

Also in **Latvia** the possibilities to solve environmental problems are determined by financial resources. One of the possibilities of raising money is given by the Law on Natural Resource Taxes. The aim of these taxes is to limit environmental pollution and misuse of natural resources, simultaneously accumulating money for financing environmental protection measures. The tax is paid for the actual use of natural resources and the amount of environmental pollution. The law provides two parts: a tax and a penalty. Norms in both cases are similar, the way of payment is different.

The tax for the use of natural resources is transferred directly to a budget of a municipality and the tax for pollution is divided between a municipal budget (75%) and the state budget (25%). Penalties for over-use of natural resources or excessive pollution are transferred in threefold amounts to the Environmental and Natural Resources Fund. The fund is controlled by the Government and resources can be used for needs of environmental protection only. Resources which municipalities get from the tax are insignificant, approximately 2-3 percent of the budget annually. In some rural municipalities with gravel-pits, dolomite etc., the tax can cover 20 percent of the budget or even more. The fund, in its turn, gives the possibility of accumulating resources for additional financing of larger regional environmental protection objects, treatment facilities etc.

In **Lithuania**, municipal environmental departments are financed by taxes, local fees and air pollution fines. All local environmental projects are financed by the Environmental Protection Fund, which derives its financial resources from two taxes (discharge permit and permission to use natural resources). The Fund received 70% of the taxes; the rest is taken over by the State, out of which 5% goes to the regional state agencies.

Local authorities face a great deal of economic problems in dealing with environmental questions. The usual way to work in this field is to do it through programmes which are financed by the Environmental Protection Fund and from the budget. Due to the general reform and economic difficulties local authorities are not in a position to allocate enough resources to the programmes.

In **Russia**, the environmental administration is going through a period of constant change. Up to now, environmental protection activity in cities has been executed by authorised and specialised environmental organisations and environmental commissions of municipal councils. Local governments could influence effectively on their activity. By the Decree of the President of Russia on self-governmenta, municipal councils were disbanded. As a result of authority structure reorganisation in many cities local executive governments began to disband city nature conservation committees (CNCC) and organise environmental municipal departments approximately with the same responsibilities.

CNCCs still functioning in many cities have responsibilities in environmental planning, management and permission procedures concerning land use, pollutant discharge and city construction projects.. CNCCs are subordinated both to regional environmental committees of the Ministry of environmental protection and natural resources and local governments.

Monitoring and control of environmental quality are mainly a responsibility of Russian Federal Hydrometeorological and Environment Monitoring Service organisations. But the aim is to combine central and local environmental administration as efficiently as possible and give more responsibilities to local governments in organising environmental administration, in the use of natural resources and in the state of the environment in general.

e. Co-operation between Local and Regional Authorities, the Voluntary Sector and Private Sector on Environmental Questions

In **Estonia**, independent environmental agencies working within municipalities are, for instance, in Tallinn, the Green Regiment (protects as a guard unit the nature and order of the Aegna Island in the Gulf of Finland), the Green Movement (makes surveys and inspects), the energy centre of the Green Movement "Taasen", Tallinn Department of the Association of Nature Protection (propagates nature protection, controls general weal), Estonian Office of the "Coalition Clean Baltic".

In **Lithuania**, there are already some non-profit-making organisations involved in the research of alternative energy resources, waste recycling programmes (in Kaunas) and private firms seeking more efficient and cleaner technologies in waste treatment (in Vilnius). The Healthy City programme for Kaunas has prepared a Greenery programme, which is based on collecting information, inventory and managements of existing resources. The programme is financed by the municipality and individual enterprises.

In **Russia**, there are very few examples of relations between local government and the voluntary sector and more often they have unfortunately a character of conflict. The private sector is rapidly developing and there are companies wanting to invest in environmental protection activities. But the absence of incentives in environmental protection is hampering this development and activity. Ecological and political movements have been organised by businessmen, deputies and municipal officials.

f. Policies for raising public awareness

In **Estonia**, local authorities have practically no means for raising public awareness. In Tallinn, publicity campaigns could be done by receiving funds from the Tallinn Department of the Environment Fund and the Tallinn Waste Management Fund.

In **Latvia**, according to the Law on Environmental Protection, citizens and public organisations may request that state institutions provide information on environmental effects of any proposed facilities, of facilities under construction, of environmental impact statements and of enquiry results. Environmental protection institutions have a duty to regularly inform inhabitants about the state of the environment. When an EIA is to be carried out, the investor

is required to discuss the project concept and its potential environmental effects with the representatives of social organisations and citizens. A detailed procedure for public consultations has not yet been introduced.

In **Lithuania**, policies for raising public awareness are mainly performed on a national scale by ecological exhibitions and the mass media. The City of Kaunas has a page on ecological topics in the city newspaper; produces a bulletin and organises seminars. In addition, as a participant in the "Healthy Cities" programme, the City offers its inhabitants a constant exhibition and informative publications on the relevant topic.

g. Environmental education in schools

In **Estonia**, many schools have environmental education as a facultative subject. In **Latvia**, schools may establish environmental protection as a local or optional course. In **Lithuania**, the situation is rapidly improving in schools. High Schools have introduced ecology among the obligatory subjects. In Kaunas an environmental centre for school children was opened.

h. Political priorities of local government in environmental questions

Estonians noted that the question was difficult to answer. The main environmental issues in Tallinn are waste management, reduction of traffic pollution and raising public awareness.

It could be noted that in an interview made in 1992 among Estonian local representatives, improved local environment protection was rated among the most urgent reforms. A clear majority of answers preferred both municipal and regional/state involvement with regard to environmental protection.

In **Latvia**, there is no special nationwide demand to include in the curriculum environmental protection or ecology, but, despite this, there are different subjects, such as geography, biology and chemistry which deal with environmental problems.

Lithuania's political priorities of local governments are connected to the public utility sector, especially water cleaning plants. They consider it very important to learn from the experience of other countries in environmental questions and projects. Much consideration is given to the control of activities of neighbouring countries which influence the ecological situation in Lithuania, like transit carriers with toxic and chemical materials.

B. CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES IN THE EASTERN BALTIC REGION

Nowadays, co-operation in environmental questions influencing local and regional authorities takes place in the Baltic Sea region in many forms, as for instance the following list of organisations and programmes verifies:

1. *The Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE)*

The Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), recently renamed the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), has latterly become increasingly involved in co-operation between local and regional authorities in the Baltic Sea region.

This involvement has taken the form, for example, of close association with the recent Baltic Sea Conference, held in Helsinki (see later, point C); appointment of delegates to meetings and other events in the context of co-operation in the area; and support of the work of the national associations of municipalities in the area, eg the award in 1993 of observer status with the CLRAE to the Union of Baltic Cities.

The Congress will also help to organise and support the next Baltic Sea Conference, after the Helsinki meeting, to be held in Sweden in 1995.

The Council of Europe's LODE programme for support of local and regional democracy in Central and Eastern European countries also includes activities relating to the Eastern Baltic states. Over the last 18 months, such activities have taken the form of help and advice on new legislation concerning local government; the distribution of territorial responsibility between different levels of public administration; extension of the experience of the European Network of Training Centres; encouragement and strengthening of the role of the national associations and the organisation of meetings relating to reinforcement of the economic base of local government.

As from 1994, this part of the LODE programme is conducted in collaboration with the PHARE programme of the European Union.

2. *The Commission of the European Union*

The EU has several programmes of co-operation on the local and regional levels. The Interreg Programme supports co-operation between local and regional authorities in border areas and the Ouverture programme supports co-operation between the EU and Central and Eastern European local and regional authorities.

The ECOS Programme (Eastern Europe City Co-operation) contributes to co-operation between the EU and Central and Eastern European local and regional authorities, the focus being on the development of local democracy. The programme is administered by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

The PHARE programme assists co-operation between the EU and former communist countries, excluding the former Soviet Union, and the TACIS programme assists co-operation between EU countries of the former Soviet Union. Environmental projects are favoured and there is a special twinning part in these programmes.

The Baltic Sea Conference proposed that the EU should launch a special Baltic Sea Region programme, that takes into consideration the joint project Vision and Strategies for the year 2010 and such initiatives as the Baltic Eco-Cities Programme and Baltic Sustainable Cities Programme.

3. *The Helsinki Convention and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)*

The Helsinki Commission (the states involved being Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden) has done valuable work in monitoring the state of the Baltic and improving its quality under the 1974 Helsinki Convention. The Convention has clarified questions of responsibility, set practical goals for protection of the Baltic and made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the state of the Baltic and factors affecting it. A noteworthy achievement was the recently completed comprehensive programme for the protection of the Baltic, which listed 132 investments in environmental protection to be carried out urgently (the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme). The programme was drawn up as a result of an initiative launched by the prime ministers of the Baltic countries in 1990. It is essential for all parties to ensure funding for the implementation of this eminently practical programme.

The Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme was elaborated by an ad hoc high level Task Force established within the framework of the Helsinki Commission and was decided by the ministerial meeting at Prime Minister level, held in Ronneby in 1990.

According to Mr Ulf Ehlin, Executive Secretary of the Helsinki Commission, a Programme Implementation Task Force, HELCOM PITF, was established within HELCOM to follow up the implementation of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme. In the HELCOM PITF, all the countries with territory within the drainage area are participating, as well as the four financial institutions (EIB, EBRD, NIB and WB) and the Nordic Environmental Financing Corporation, NEFCO. The Baltic Sea Fishery Corporation, as well as international non-governmental organisations - World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), and Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) are also participating in the work.

The Ministers of the Environment and High Representatives of Governments adopted the Gdansk Declaration in 1993. In this Declaration, inter alia, they committed their countries to making all possible efforts to mobilise local, national, bilateral or multilateral financial and other resources for the implementation of the programme, including the financing of grants.

4. *The World Health Organisation*

The Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organisation (WHO), based in Copenhagen, has developed a very successful network of cities which subscribe to the Charter for Health adopted by the WHO.

Known as the "Healthy Cities" network, it includes a significant number of municipalities in the Baltic Sea region. The network organises periodic review conferences of the local authority policies for public health in the cities in question and a number of specific projects relating to the Baltic area.

Further information should be sought from the WHO Regional Office for Europe, 8 Scherfigsvej, DK - 2100 Copenhagen.

5. *The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)*

CBSS was established in 1992 as an intergovernmental co-operation structure for the ten coastal states and the EU Commission. The subjects to be dealt with are, for instance, energy issues and protection of the environment, with an emphasis on cleaning up the Baltic Sea as a joint responsibility. The CBSS has no permanent bodies, nor a budget.

The Council has decided to establish a "Euro-faculty" in Riga, with branches to be opened in Tallinn and Vilnius. The purpose of this institution of higher education is to introduce both teachers and students of the new democracies of the Baltic Sea area to the science of law and market economy studies with a practical orientation. Another achievement of the Council was the drafting of a comprehensive report on problems relating to nuclear and radiation safety in the area. This pioneer undertaking, comprising, for the first time, both the civilian and the military aspects concerned, was conducted by the working group on Radiation and Nuclear Safety. The group's future work includes the setting up of a joint monitoring network for radiation safety in the Baltic region.

6. *Bilateral environmental programmes*

Almost all industrial European countries have their own individual programmes to support countries in transition in the Baltic Sea region. In particular, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden have been active towards Eastern Baltic countries. The main focus is often on environmental questions.

7. *The Joint Project: Vision and Strategies for the Year 2010*

The project started at the initiative of the Swedish Minister in 1992 as a process of working together for the future development of the Baltic Sea region. Each participating country (Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden) has designated Focal Points responsible for monitoring the working process. The Group of Focal Points will draft a final report within some two years.

Sweden has assumed responsibility for providing the project with a secretariat. The secretariat is housed in the Baltic Institute in Karlskrona.

8. *The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)*

CEMR is administering the ECOS programme of the EU.

A proposal was made at the Baltic Sea Conference that the CEMR should use its influence to implement the Baltic Sea region programme proposed to the Commission of the European Union.

9. *Twinning*

Direct contacts between municipalities in the Baltic Sea region have long historical backgrounds and are perhaps more numerous than ever. For example, Danish municipalities have twinning relations with 53 Polish municipalities and Finnish municipalities have relations with about 130 Estonian and 85 Russian municipalities.

Examples of environmental twinings and partnerships in the Baltic Sea region can also be given.

The Environmental Centre for Administration and Technologies (ECAT) is a concept to combine know-how for developing environmental policies, especially focusing on improving the state of the environment in the Baltic Sea. Twinning partners so far are Saint Petersburg (Russia)/Hamburg (Germany) and Bremen (Germany)/Riga (Latvia). The Commission of the European Union supports the project financially. After three years' financing, the ECAT centres must be able to continue existing as independent consultant institutions.

The City of Tampere (Finland) is training the personnel involved in environmental protection, water supply and sewage treatment in Tartu (Estonia). Many Finnish municipalities have delivered technical equipment for sewage treatment to Estonian municipalities, eg the City of Helsinki to Tallinn. The cities of Vaasa (Finland) and Pärnu (Estonia) have co-operated in the reconstruction of Pärnu dump site. The Helsinki Metropolitan Area (Finland) has started co-operation in air pollution control in Estonia.

Co-operation between Finnish and Russian cities and towns in environmental protection has taken its first steps. The cities of Imatra (Finland) and Svetlogorsk (Russia) have close co-operation, particularly in the field of air pollution control and the regular exchange of information on environmental issues. The cities of Lappeenranta (Finland) and Viborg (Russia) have held a seminar for schoolteachers in Viborg about environmental education. The City of Helsinki (Finland) has signed a co-operation programme with the City of St. Petersburg (Russia).

The town of Chemnitz (Germany) has experience of twinning on environmental questions with Lodz (Poland) as do the towns of Schwerin (Germany) with Tallinn (Estonia) and Rostock (Germany) with Riga (Latvia).

10. *National municipal associations in the Baltic Sea region*

- the Union of Russian Cities
- the Union of Small Towns in Russia
- the Norwegian Association of Local Authorities
- the Association of Swedish Local Authorities
 - especially with Estonia
- the Federation of County Councils in Sweden
- the Association of Finnish Local Authorities
 - especially with Estonia and Russia
 - the Baltic Sea Conference
 - training of Polish sewage treatment experts
- the Union of Local Self-Government in Latvia
- the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark
 - especially with Poland and Lithuania
- the Association of County Councils, Denmark
- the Association of Estonian Cities
- the Association of Lithuanian Cities

11. *The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)*

ICLEI was founded in 1990, as an international environmental agency serving local authorities. ICLEI has several campaigns to serve municipalities in developing environmental practices. The Local Agenda 21 campaign seeks to facilitate a local government response to the UNCED mandate that all local authorities establish a "Local Agenda 21" by 1993. ICLEI's programme consists of three main components: Local Campaigns, National Association Campaigns and the Local Agenda 21 Model Programme.

The Baltic Eco-Cities Programme was established in 1992 to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to meet the environmental challenges around the Baltic Sea. The programme is in its preparatory phase and ICLEI intends to run it from 1993 to 1995.

The Baltic LEIComm Programme (Local Environmental Initiatives Communications Networks) is an information and communications system for municipalities. Participants in the Baltic Sea region are from Denmark, Germany, Poland, Finland, Latvia, Russia, Sweden and Estonia.

The Manual on Good Environmental Practice by Local Governments in Central and Eastern Europe is drawing on expertise in the West and advice from Central and Eastern European partners in nine countries for the elaboration of an environmental manual, aimed at small- and medium-sized municipalities. Sponsors and co-sponsors are the Regional Environment Centre in Budapest, the EC Commission, the CEMR and the CLRAE.

12. *The Union of Baltic Cities (UBC)*

UBC has 39 member cities in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland. UBC has five permanent working commissions, one of them being the Commission on Environmental Protection.

The objectives of the Baltic Sustainable Cities Programme of UBC are to use city to city transfer of expertise and experience, to involve politicians and planners in dialogue on strategic development and to identify and support common projects and action plans. Cities that have joined the Programme are Tallinn, Riga, Klaipeda, Kaliningrad and Elblag, which are now to be linked with western cities within the UBC Commission on Environmental Protection.

UBC has put forward a proposal for co-operation between UBC and HELCOM PITF. The co-operation is to support the realisation of the HELCOM programme in (a) strengthening institutions at a local level in order to handle decentralised environmental management, via training and exchange programmes to transfer know-how of Western cities to Eastern cities; (b) job training and (c) developing local capacity to carry out environmental audits.

13. *The Coalition Clean Baltic*

The Coalition Clean Baltic was established as a grass roots network of 22 ecological non-governmental organisations from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden for co-operation among environmental NGOs in all the Baltic Sea countries. It has now been acknowledged as one of the key actors on the environmental scene in the Baltic. CCB has a goal to promote, on a non-partisan, non-profit-making basis, the protection of environmental and natural resources of the Baltic Sea area. CCB has assisted with the development and restructuring of environmental NGOs in the Eastern Baltic states. CCB also supports nature conservation and environmental protection projects at the request of participating groups.

Among the most important joint field projects run by CCB member organisations can be mentioned nutrient monitoring and monitoring of halogenated organic substances in Estonia; the study of natural resources on Estonian islands in the Gulf of Finland; the restoration of small streams and their natural values in Latvia and Lithuania; conservation of wetlands in Lithuania, to mention only a few.

CCB has also arranged training courses for local groups and environmental activists in all the Eastern Baltic Sea countries. CCB has established non-governmental Baltic Sea secretariats in Eastern Baltic Sea countries.

14. *The European Union for Coastal Conservation*

The European Union for Coastal Conservation is an international non-governmental association currently beginning to work in the Baltic Sea area. It is a developer of the Coastal Management and Environment Programme for Baltic and Mediterranean Areas (COMER). As part of COMER, the Baltic Coastal Corridor programme is to be launched.

15. *Financial organisations*

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) lays special emphasis on sustainable development and environmental problems. It gives loans mainly to the private sector, but also to the public sector for investments in infrastructure which promote the private sector. The Nordic-Baltic Fund has functioned within the EBRD since 1992.

Environment and infrastructure are strongly represented in financial activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) to Eastern Baltic Sea countries. Within the latter, such programmes as the Baltic Investment Loans, the Baltic Investment Programme's Technical Assistance Fund and the Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation can be mentioned.

C. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE BALTIC SEA CONFERENCE, HELSINKI, 1-3 SEPTEMBER 1993

1. The role of local authorities in promoting environmental protection

The significant role of local authorities in environmental protection was largely emphasised in the Baltic Sea Conference presentations.

In her welcoming address to the Baltic Sea Conference, Mrs Sirpa Pietikäinen, the Finnish Environment Minister, pointed out that land use is linked to environmental change at all scales from the local to the global level. Regional and urban development policy are directly related to the main areas of environmental impact and concern. Such areas include development patterns of settlements and urbanisation, the built environment and infrastructure, industrial locations, use of natural resources, mobility and transport and the use of water systems. Land use changes affect natural and semi-natural habitats in ways which can accumulate to have an impact on bio-diversity. Therefore, according to Sirpa Pietikäinen, land use planning should be considered as an instrument of environmental policy. Regional co-operation becomes more necessary than ever.

Mr Bengt Mollstedt, the President of the CLRAE, spoke about the European Charter of Local Self-Government. He said that this Charter, defining the dimension and mechanism for local self-government and financial autonomy and identifying the distribution of responsibility between different levels of territorial authority, has become the basis, in many countries, for newly-established local democracy.

Mr Pertti Vuola, President of the Council of the Association of Finnish Local Authorities, addressed the closing session of the Conference with the following words:

"Municipalities and towns in the Baltic area thus share a common mission as guarantors of the quality of their immediate environment and of the air and the sea.

Local authorities have both the expertise and the means to influence the environment both as a whole and locally; they bear responsibility for the state of the environment now and in years to come. As they are in charge of implementation, they can achieve significant practical results in environmental protection.

The importance of local authorities has been widely recognised and confirmed in the joint declarations of international conferences and in the conventions to which the declaration approved by the present conference refers".

The Deputy Secretary General of ICLEI, Mr Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, emphasised the role of local authorities in his presentation in the Baltic Sea Conference. He said that the role of municipalities in implementing environmental programmes and in enforcing environmental laws is receiving more and more recognition. He mentioned two examples by referring to Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration and the "Green Paper on the Urban Environment" of the Commission of the European Communities. Also the fifth environmental

programme of the EU stresses the role of local authorities "through the exercise of their statutory functions as competent authorities for many of the existing Directives and Regulations".

Mr Otto-Zimmermann described the capacities of municipalities in keeping the Baltic area clean, as follows:

They:

- * carry out political responsibility in terms of planning for the industrial, commercial and agricultural structure in their area,
- * can exert influence on the emission of toxins, depending on the particular area of which they are in charge, by issuing permits and applying regulations,
- * are responsible for a wide range of possibilities of protecting the landscape in coastal regions and keeping beaches clean.

He also referred to the fact that municipalities, in many countries, are largely responsible for waste water and solid waste management.

In conclusion, regarding the need to develop local environmental activities, he mentioned the following capacities as those which should be developed:

- * clear and extended legal responsibilities and power for the fulfilment of tasks "on site" and a supportive political and legal framework which must be established by national governments,
- * appropriate administrative structures and bodies to handle the various environmental tasks, for instance related to the integration of environmental consideration in overall planning, to the establishment and enforcement of environmental legislation and to operational tasks like water supply, waste water treatment, solid waste management and energy supply,
- * an open, publicly visible decision-making process,
- * the necessary funding and
- * adequate expertise and experience.

Mr Anders Engström, President of the Union of the Baltic Cities, emphasised the need to formulate a new, more extended conception of international co-operation in the Baltic Sea region. Such co-operation should lead to:

- * the development of institutions and management systems allowing the better absorption of external funds,
- * the development of management and institutional structures and
- * support for international co-operation at a local level, eg organisations such as CCB, WWF and UBC.

2. Co-operation between Western and Eastern Baltic Sea countries in the field of environmental protection

The Commissioner of the European Communities, **Yoannis Paleokrassas**, stated in his presentation at the Baltic Sea Conference, that the integration of the European Community, its progressive enlargement, its deepening and the cohesion of the European Union, as shaped by the Maastricht Treaty, are of vital importance to the continent's future stability. As we progress from the competition of the Internal Market towards economic and monetary union, as well as economic and social cohesion in the member states, the Community's environmental policy will be a vital factor in shaping a new, more acceptable and more suitable model of development internally, but also on an international level. Europe needs a high standard of environmental protection. The Community is fully committed to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the European Community, represented by the Commission, will soon become a contracting party to the 1992 revised Helsinki Convention.

Mr Bengt Mollstedt, President of the CLRAE, addressed the Baltic Sea Conference by emphasising the interest of the CLRAE in supporting co-operation in the Baltic Sea area. It is a development in which the CLRAE takes a close interest, one which the CLRAE has already attempted to foster in a modest way and one where the CLRAE could offer a platform similar in strength and support to the one it already offers, for example, for co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin or in the Carpathian area.

Professor Sven Illeris from Roskilde University (Denmark) also analyzed co-operation between Eastern and Western Baltic countries at the Baltic Sea Conference. He pointed out that, for local and regional authorities, the way to increase skills is through contacts and co-operation with more experienced partners. It is, he said, important therefore that the EU has launched programmes which support co-operation in this field. This most important programme (Interreg) supports co-operation between local and regional authorities in border areas. More modest programmes support co-operation between local and regional authorities in the EU (the Recite and PEE programmes) or between the EU and Central and Eastern European local and regional authorities (the Ouverture and ECOS programmes).

The Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme contains, according to Mr Ulf Ehlin's presentation at the Baltic Sea Conference, some components related to fields which, to a great extent, must be implemented on a local level. Many local authorities in Western countries have good experience and skills in these fields. One such field is planning and operating plants and networks for water supply and waste water treatment and solid waste management. Another is planning the energy and heat production in relation to air pollution problems in densely-populated areas.

Co-operation can be, as Mr Ehlin said, arranged through agreements between twin cities or as co-operation between a number of cities. It can also be organised by organisations such as the UBC and ICLEI.

Mr Vuola also stressed the need to transfer Western experience to the Eastern Baltic countries. He said:

"One distinctive feature of Baltic environmental co-operation particularly important to the development of a strategy for co-operation is the fact that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are in the midst of a large-scale local government reform, whereas the municipalities of Western Europe have a long tradition of self-government.

It is therefore doubly important to make local government experience and know-how in Western Europe available to countries and local authorities in Central and Eastern Europe. All forms of co-operation are valuable: direct co-operation between local authorities, supplying training resources and supporting organisations such as ICLEI in their efforts to promote co-operation and the exchange of information between towns and municipalities in different Baltic countries. It is my impression that the people of Eastern Europe know what they want and are capable of learning from Western experience, whether good or bad, once the transfer of information and experience has been arranged".

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General

There are major environmental problems in the Eastern Baltic Sea countries. The state of the environment in widespread areas is poor; due to the lack of financial resources the technology used in environmental protection is insufficient. There are also deficiencies in monitoring and supervising activities. Problems can be found in all fields of environmental protection such as in the combatting of air pollution, waste in water treatment, in solid waste management and in soil protection. The most significant difference between Western and Eastern Baltic Sea countries is that, in many cases, environmental degradation and pollution is even affecting human health in Eastern countries.

2. Legislation

In general, it is difficult to say anything certain about local environmental administration in the Baltic states. The restructuring of legislation on environmental protection is under way and local administration is still being developed. Privatisation and land reform are under implementation at present. There is very little experience, for instance, in procedures for issuing new permits.

Due to the old and inefficient legislation, the mechanism of environmental protection cannot be implemented properly. Local authorities do not have sufficient legal rights to control the environmental impact of businesses, industry and residential areas. In addition, the appropriate division of labour between state, regional and local authorities in environmental protection is obviously not sufficiently clear.

The issuing of permits should be at regional level but, from the point of view of local democracy, municipalities should have a veto or a say in the decision-making process. Municipalities should, in any case, have the opportunity to apply control on businesses and industry. More attention should be paid to strengthening locally-based regional governments, and less to the state regional agencies.

Land use planning should be developed to be an instrument in the hands of Local Authorities in formulating and implementing environmental policies. Land use planning can have a great influence in achieving locally determined environmental targets, as well as in fulfilling international commitments like the 1992 Helsinki Convention and Rio Declaration.

The development of land use planning procedures in the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea should be taken as one of the main fields in Baltic Sea co-operation.

3. Finance

The financial mechanisms are not sufficient either. For instance, the public utilities sector cannot function on a self-supporting basis being still directly or indirectly subsidised from the budget. In the present economic situation, it is nearly impossible for private

consumers, either households or businesses, to pay true prices for electricity, gas, water supply or waste water and solid waste management. Also, systems for charging payments from beneficiaries are to be improved.

The system of charging for the use of natural resources and levying pollution taxes is working surprisingly well and offers one national way of financing environmental and infrastructure investments.

4. Training

Experts on environmental issues are generally few and far between, especially at a local level, most of them working at regional level. The expertise which is available should be used as efficiently as possible. The training of environmental personnel is of great importance and should be considered as a priority activity in international co-operation. This applies both to state and local officials and to personnel operating and maintaining public utilities, ie water and sewage waterworks, etc.

5. New approaches

In developing environmentally-friendly practices, the advantage should be taken from those environmentally-sound solutions, which are already in use, like public transport. The creation of new problems should also be avoided, for example allowing the quantity of waste to increase, requiring expensive waste treatment systems and plants, instead of avoiding the unnecessary generation of waste in production and consumption.

Municipal activities having negative impacts on the environment should be treated as tightly as other activities.

More and reliable information about the state of the environment should be available to the people. The development of public awareness and political commitment in the Baltic Sea countries on all levels is of vital importance in promoting environmental protection in the area. The participation of non-governmental organisations and the development of effective environmental education programmes are to be considered as necessary means to support both public awareness and political commitment.

Citizens and voluntary organisations are of great importance in all environmental work. They should be supported, as also the development of co-operation between voluntary organisations and municipal administration.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government could be considered as a sound basis for the development of local self-governments in countries surrounding the Baltic Sea.

6. Co-operation

An essential ingredient of successful environmental protection is co-operation in all forms and at all levels. There is still room for improvement in both national and international co-operation between municipalities and towns throughout the Baltic area.

National governments and international organisations like the EU, EC, CLRAE, the Council of Nordic Countries, the Council of Baltic Countries, etc, as well as banks and other financing organisations should encourage and support all relevant activities to develop direct co-operation between local authorities within the Baltic Sea area in exchange of experience in environmental matters. All forms of co-operation like twinning, local networks and the work of national and international associations of local authorities should be recognised as targets for support.

It should also be noted that co-operation between Western and Eastern Baltic Sea countries should be based on needs and priorities defined by the Eastern countries themselves. The collection of necessary information and data for this priority setting should be supported by Western countries. The variety of aid agencies and targets for funding is wide and creates a clear need to coordinate activities and to compile information. The development of necessary, but not too heavy, forms of this coordination should be taken into consideration.

The joint responsibility for the Baltic environment also means Western participation in environmental investments in the East. The efficient and sensible thing is to make investments with an impact on the climate and state of the Baltic in places where the best return on invested capital can be expected - in other words, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe. This also makes sense for the environment of the Western European states - the air and the sea are shared by all; environmental impacts know no administrative boundaries.

It is essential for all parties to ensure funding for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme.

7. Documentation

The state of the Marine Environment on the Baltic Sea, pollution load from different sources to the Baltic Sea and the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme are briefly presented in the report "The Baltic Sea -- Our Common Environment, Background Report of the State of the Baltic Sea". In the report, reference is also made to the more detailed reports on the subject, mainly compiled by the HELCOM.

General information on the state of the environment within the territory of each of the Eastern Baltic countries can be found, for instance, in the following reports:

- Estonian Environment 1992, Environmental Report 6, Environment Data Centre, National Board of Waters and the Environment, Helsinki 1993
- National Report of Estonia to UNCED 1992, Ministry of the Environment, Republic of Estonia, 1992
- National Report of Latvia to UNCED 1992, Environmental Protection Committee, Republic of Latvia, 1992
- Environmental Situation and Project Identification in the Leningrad Region, Nordic Project Fund (NoPEF), Jaakko Pöyry Ltd, 1990

- Study of Environmental Protection in Poland (NoPEF), EKONO Ltd, 1990
- Environmental priority action programme for Leningrad, Leningrad Region, Karelia and Estonia, Ministry of the Environment of Finland.