

Brussels Call - for the Protection of the Sea

Supported by the regions:

Schleswig-Holstein
Andalusia
Azores
Bremen
Bretagne
Devon
Hamburg
East Macedonia and Thrace
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Niedersachsen
North Norway (Nordland & Troms)
Pays de la Loire
Trelleborg

Supported by the regional networks:

Baltic SeaStates Subregional Co-operation
(BSSSC)
Corinthian Gulf Association

Our Key Messages

- It is essential to anchor the precautionary principle, the ecosystem approach and the polluter-pays principle as core elements in the EU Marine Strategy Directive. According to the requirements of specification the Directive should be formulated as precisely as possible, so that nobody can hide behind false interpretations. In particular the Directive can only be strong and legally binding, if its aims and goals are explicitly stipulated in Article 1 and hence “must be achieved” to avoid a purely aspirational statement.
- It is essential to have at least a qualitative definition of the good environmental status making sure that adequate and comparable standards will be set for all European marine waters. In order to guarantee an integrated and ecosystem-based management approach, this definition must take into account all anthropogeneous influencing factors on the marine ecosystems, according to the Green Paper.
- Large-scale and well-managed marine protected areas are a promising instrument for safeguarding biodiversity as well as sensitive ecosystems and their components. Moreover they provide opportunities for the recovery of depleted fish stocks. At the same time they increase the ocean’s resilience against the consequences of various human impacts including climate change.

Our Aims and Goals

1. The supporting regions are maritime [institutions/regions]. In accepting responsibility for the protection of the sea they also act for the conservation of creation and for future generations.

The regions therefore call for an effective protection of the sea and for the elaboration of a strong and legally binding European marine strategy policy.

2. The supporting regions plead for the development of an integrated marine policy. They therefore regard the submission of the Green Paper on future European Maritime Policy by the European Commission to be a very positive step. The economic development it describes requires clean and healthy seas – it relies on a successful protection of the sea.

The supporting regions therefore call for further strengthening the importance of marine conservation in the future as an indispensable prerequisite for economic development and quality of life for people.

3. Many important branches of economic activities in the [supporting institutions/regions] rely on the seas – even as the [supporting institutions/regions] rely on their successful economy.

The supporting regions therefore call for the specification of the EU-Marine Strategy Directive with consistent pan-European quality objectives to ensure fair competition.

4. The supporting regions recognise the tremendous achievements already made in the context of regional marine conventions which have led to significant progress in marine protection within the past decades.

The supporting regions therefore call for the recognition and maintenance of the success of the existing marine regional conventions. The forthcoming EU-Marine Strategy Directive must neither endanger or diminish current ambitious standards nor lead to more bureaucracy!

5. The supporting regions recognise that the seas suffer unrelieved pressures from human activities – as recently demonstrated in several surveys.

The supporting regions therefore call for a realistic and at the same time effective creation of the EU Marine Strategy Directive in content and timeframe and the application of the precautionary principle as a basic element. Current international obligations need to be assimilated.

6. The supporting regions assert that the predominant source of nutrients and other hazardous substances entering the seas is land-based and reaches the marine environment via rivers. A good status of the marine environment cannot be attained without the involvement of the

countries upstream in the river basins. This problem is already being addressed by the European Water Framework Directive.

The supporting regions therefore call for active participation of all involved parties in the attainment of the good ecological status of the marine environment and in making use of all chances offered by the European Water Framework Directive to manifestly reduce inputs into the seas.

7. The supporting regions realise that an efficient marine policy for the protection of the marine environment as a basis of existence can only succeed on the foundation of sound scientific information and data and will remain unreliable without surveillance and appropriate documentation.

The supporting regions therefore call for an enhancement of the efficiency of existing European marine monitoring activities based on national programmes, regional conventions for sea protection and EU Directives, streamlining the corresponding reporting obligations and combining all activities and commitments to use synergies to the fullest, reduce concurrent work and improve quality.

8. The supporting regions possess extensive experience with cooperations, voluntary agreements, and treaties regulated by public law concerning the protection of the marine environment. They are convinced that such voluntary agreements complement law in many instances and may in some cases even replace it.

The supporting regions therefore call for further development and support of the instruments of cooperation with different stakeholders and voluntary agreements also at European level in order to underpin the EU Marine Strategy Directive.

9. The supporting regions have been actively involved in the development of a network of marine protected areas according to the EU-Habitat and Birds-Directives, several regional marine conventions as well as the International Maritime Organization (IMO). They favour the establishment and good management of marine protected areas as well as other protection strategies as promising measures to achieve specific conservation objectives and thus to protect the seas. They are also aware that according to the worldwide Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development marine protected areas are considered a vital contribution to the conservation of the world's natural and cultural resources.

The supporting regions therefore call for forceful implementation of the resolutions of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of the Marine Environment in Bremen in 2003 pertaining to the designation and the management of marine protected areas as

well as the corresponding recommendations¹ in order to achieve the goal of establishing an ecologically coherent network of well managed protected areas at a regional level which also contributes to the global network of marine protected areas as envisaged by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and by the 7th Conference of the Parties to the CBD.

10. The supporting regions are concerned about the effects of chronic oil pollution of the seas and fear far-reaching impacts on the environment from oil spills.

The supporting regions call to the member states of the EU to

- a. where not already implemented, prepare appropriate oil spill combat systems for their territorial waters**

initiate the compilation of pan-European standards for the prevention of marine pollution from shipping

- b. g at EU level and**
- c. further strengthen the cooperation for the prevention of such marine pollution.**

¹ such as HELCOM Recommendation 15/5, OSPAR Recommendation 2003/3 and associated guidelines respectively