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Russia in the System of the European
Environmental Governance of the Baltic
Sea Area

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Introduction

The paper is aimed on the finding out of some political and societal conditions for the protection of the Baltic Sea in the case of Russia, which is the only non-EU member state in the Baltic Sea area. Therefore, in comparison with the other coastal countries like Finland, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Denmark¹, Russia presents a special case of participation in the European environmental governance system which was developed around the Baltic Sea. Therefore, it is especially interesting and important to understand how and why Russia participates in it, what the political and social reasons are of such a way of participation and what consequences it has both for the federal, regional and local policies in Russia.

The paper, as well as the whole research on which the paper is based, rests on the assumptions that the relatively unsuccessful actions aimed to protect the Baltic Sea cannot be explained only by lack of scientific knowledge of the existing ecological problems. Here, an important role is played by the sociocultural factors that influence the course of environmental policy at different levels: supranational, national and subnational. Special attention is drawn to the problem of eutrophication or enrichment of water bodies with so called biogenic substances (phosphates, nitrogen, etc), which leads to massive algae bloom and lack of oxygen for marine organisms.

Thus, the major objective of the paper consists in the analysis of Russia's participation in international Baltic Sea protection projects, the examination of measures for the Baltic Sea protection taken by federal bodies, and the analysis of the actions undertaken by regional authorities on the level of the subjects of federation in the 1990-2000s.

The main task is to determine how the environmental policies at the different levels are shaped and how they can be influenced by the society. The empirical examples for the analysis of public participation in Baltic Sea protection at the regional level include three constituent entities of the Russian Federation: the Kaliningrad and the Leningrad regions and the city of Saint-Petersburg.

In the framework of the research, about 20 semi-structured interviews were held in these three subjects of the Russian Federation. The respondents included representatives of 1) federal, regional and local authorities responsible for environment policy, 2) regional media, 3) non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 4) and the scientific community. The interview differed with each group; however, all interviews contained questions pertaining to:

¹ The results of the whole project and all the cases are briefly presented here: Pihlajamäki, M. and Tynkkynen, N. (Eds), 2011. Governing the blue-green Baltic Sea – societal challenges of the marine eutrophication prevention. FIIA-report 31/2011: <http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/233/>

- the environmental problems of the Baltic Sea in Russia and specific regions;
- the solutions to those problems and their efficacy.

The structure of the research determined the structure of the paper. The overview of Russia's participation in the protection of the Baltic Sea is followed by the research-based analysis of the assessment of environmental problems and the triggers for their recognition in three analyzed regions: St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast' and Kaliningrad oblast'. The emphasis is placed on the understanding of the problem of eutrophication of the Baltic Sea in the regions, the existing and potential solutions, and the assessment of the efficacy of solutions and obstacles to their implementation.

The Specifics of the Russian Case

The coastal strip of the Baltic Sea in Russia is very small; with a catchment area of about 420,000 km², it occupies only 2 per cent of the total area of the water basin. Nevertheless, Russia exerts significant influence on the environmental state of the Baltic Sea. The water basin located in this area is significantly polluted, and the level of eutrophication is very high; both of which are factors primarily associated with a high amount of pollutants in waste water. According to HELCOM statistics from 2009, Russia ranked third in the release of nitrates and second in phosphate emissions of the nine Baltic Sea countries². In terms of potential environmental risks, the bodies of water around the cities of St. Petersburg, Petrozavodsk and Pskov are known to contain the maximum concentration of heavy metals and phenols. According to RusNIP report, Leningrad oblast', an area adjacent to St. Petersburg, that holds the second position after St. Petersburg among the coastal regions of Russia, can dispose annually 303 tonnes of phosphorous and 1409 tonnes of nitrogen into the Baltic Sea without measures taken to reconstruct the waste water treatment plants³. Finally, the level of pollution in the waterways of the Kaliningrad oblast' also significantly exceeds the requirements: the concentration of phenol and oil in the Pionersky and Baltiysky port areas is 5–10 times higher than normal. Although the Kaliningrad oblast' doesn't contribute greatly towards Baltic Sea eutrophication, its waters are considered among the most polluted in the region⁴.

While some point sources, such as waste water treatment in the city of St Petersburg, have been kept under control during the last ten years, non-point sources, especially from agriculture, pose a growing threat in terms of Baltic Sea eutrophication. As a result of recent agricultural reforms in Russia, the amount of

² "Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea – An Integrated Thematic Assessment of the Effects of Nutrient Enrichment in the Baltic Sea Region". HELCOM: Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 115B, 2009, p. 77.

³ RusNIP data, 2010, p.31: <http://www.naturvardsverket.se/Documents/publikationer6400/978-91-620-6448-8.pdf>

⁴ Korotkova S. Geoenvironmental Peculiarity of the Baltic Sea. Author's Abstract. Moscow, 2008.

large-size commercially-oriented farms and production units, particularly in the Karelian Isthmus, is increasing at an alarming rate⁵.

As for data regarding the degree of environmental awareness concerning the Baltic Sea in Russia, there are no sufficient sources. This, therefore, indicates that these problems are placed in a different context compared to the Nordic and Baltic countries. Moreover, environmental issues, let alone eutrophication as a specific and complex problem, are not really addressed in public policy as a discussion point that needs to attract the attention of public opinion and civil society. Moreover, the Baltic Sea is geographically distant from Moscow, as well as from most of the other Russian regions, which makes its pollution a local issue. This, obviously, has implications on how the issue is dealt with in politics and administrations, as well as in the media.

Nevertheless, Russia has a significant influence on the condition of the Baltic Sea. This is associated not only with a high content of pollutants in wastewaters, but also with some political and social factors.

Such a complex ecological situation on the one hand is caused by such infrastructure problems as the lack of modern water treatment facilities as well as industrial enterprises. On the other hand the following factors also play vital importance: (1) Russia's exceptional geopolitical status as the only Baltic country that is not a member of the EU; (2) post-Soviet transformation of state institutions, which are among other things responsible for environmental issues; (3) and weakness of the civil society.

Since Russia is not an EU member state, the EU Baltic Sea protective measures are non-binding for Russia, and as a result the only important international power tool in Russia's case is the HELCOM. Besides, Russia regards the Baltic Sea as a strategic place for achieving its prominent economic role in the EU. Some Baltic countries have regarded an effort of Russia and Germany to lay a pipeline in the bottom of the Sea as a threat to geopolitical expansion from Moscow. It was not the idea of the new pipeline but the route itself that has caused this vigorous resistance. Finally, under the influence of the Nord Stream dispute a new agreement on International Sea Surveillance Cooperation of the Baltic Sea (SUCBAS) was signed. SUCBAS, launched in March 2009, unites eight countries of the Baltic Sea region - Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Finland, and Sweden. The main goal of the project is sharing surveillance of the Baltic Sea information to ensure safe navigation, contribute to regional economic cooperation, security, ecology, and other sectors. Since Russia has not joined SUCBAS, it has continued to stay isolated in the Baltic region. Moscow has economic partners but doesn't have sustainable political allies in that region.

⁵ Official figures for the sectoral allocation of nutrient loads are not available for Russia and the data concerning diffuse sources is so far incomplete, see "The Fourth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-4)", HELCOM: Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 94, 2004, p. 59.

Political transformations that took place in Russia over the past two decades made a significant impact on the environmental policy in general and on the protection of the Baltic Sea in particular. Thus, much reorganization of the federal government structures responsible for environmental issues had been made in the post-Soviet era. Due to this, there was no continuity in creating the ecological policies.

In addition, the federal reforms connected with the decentralization of the 1990s and re-centralization of power in the 2000s have also influenced environmental policies. There are three Subjects of the Russian Federation with direct access to the Baltic Sea and own regional specifics in the approach: the Kaliningrad and Leningrad oblast's and the city of St. Petersburg.

Finally, weak civil society institutions, and particularly weak environmental NGOs play an important role in the situation in Russia. The NGOs and environmental groups do not actively participate in the environmental policy-making, neither at federal nor at regional and local levels. The weak civil society institutions also have a negative impact on the overall level of public awareness about the state of the Baltic Sea and environmental problems in general.

The above mentioned reasons make Russia the important and exceptional case among the other Baltic countries and explain the many complexities associated with Russian Baltic Sea protection policies. In order to acquire a more detailed understanding let us in more detail consider the dynamic development of Russia's participation in the HELCOM by bearing in mind the transformation of government bodies responsible for environmental policies and the situation in the coastal regions of Russia.

History of International Cooperation on the Baltic Sea

The international significance of the Baltic Sea problem was not recognized at once. This issue began to be discussed at the international level only in the 1960s, when there was a rapid increase of phosphates and nitrates emissions into the Baltic Sea⁶. The steady decline of the Baltic Sea situation had become obvious, so the Baltic Sea countries needed to coordinate their efforts in order to clean up the sea from the extensive pollution.

The first attempt to unite the efforts of countries in the region to protect the Baltic Sea environment had been undertaken in the first half of the 1970s. In 1974 the Baltic countries signed the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, which stipulated principal measures for the prevention of further pollution of the Baltic waters. The executive authority of the Helsinki Convention is the Helsinki Commission (hereinafter - HELCOM), which

⁶ Report of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Working Group on Pollution in the Baltic Sea, Cooperative Research Report. 1970. Series A, No 15.

took up the role of the environmental focal point for monitoring and assessment of the Baltic Sea condition⁷.

The issue of anthropogenic eutrophication of the Baltic Sea became the foreground already then. It was caused by uncontrolled release of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) into the sea, which were the result of increasing industrial and agricultural production, leading to algal blooms and changes in the Baltic ecosystem.

The 1974 Helsinki Convention entered into force in May 1980 after its ratification by all countries that had access to the Baltic Sea at the time: GDR, Denmark, Poland, the USSR, Finland, GFR and Sweden.

The release of tension in the international arena in the second half of the 1980s and the intention of the Soviet Union to build dialogue and cooperation with Western countries affected the intensity of international cooperation between the countries which signed the 1974 Convention. In 1988 HELCOM adopted a political declaration, which covered the reduction of nutrients by 50% over a 10-year period. This decision was a turning point in the history of HELCOM. By the time the declaration was signed in 1988, HELCOM countries had a vast array of data about the state of Baltic ecosystems, therefore they recognized the need to create more active sea pollution prevention policies, which would require a more thoughtful and concerted action on part of all countries participating in the convention.

From this perspective, the new geopolitical situation favored HELCOM's intention to strengthen the coordinated action. It is also important to point out the basic approach to solving the problems of the Baltic Sea was shaped by the time of signing the 1988 declaration. As ecosystem monitoring showed an increase of the affected sea areas by anthropogenic eutrophication, HELCOM started to more actively and consistently advocate for the reduction of nutrient discharges into the Baltic.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union four former Soviet republics: Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Estonia joined HELCOM. In light of the new international situation, the Commission produced a new 1992 Convention of the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area. It was supplemented by the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme, which listed the main sources of the pollution of the Baltic Sea⁸ Russia owns 34 out of the 132 "hot spots" (two of them are joined, one of them is "hot spot" № 18, which refers to St. Petersburg Vodokanal and divided into 19 parts). All of them are concentrated along the coasts of the three subjects of the Russian

⁷ Helsinki Commission. Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission. The Helsinki Convention: http://www.helcom.fi/Convention/en_GB/convention/

⁸ Ehlers P. Marine Environment Protection – the Baltic Sea Example // Marine Issues: from a Scientific, Political and Legal Perspective. Kluwer Law International, 2002, p. 100.

Federation: Kaliningrad and Leningrad oblast's and the city of St. Petersburg. Despite the significant reduction of the coastal strip, Russia still pollutes the Baltic Sea with a significant amount of phosphates and nitrates. According to HELCOM, in 2009 Russia was the third largest nitrate polluter, and the second largest (after Poland) phosphates polluter of the Baltic waters⁹.

Russia ratified the Convention on October 15th, 1998, when the Government of the Russian Federation passed the resolution № 1202 "On approval of the 1992 Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area." The Convention entered into force in 2000, and thus, the Russian Federation as a HELCOM participant accepted obligations on its provisions¹⁰.

For the realization of the basic articles of the Convention, Russia is counting on the developed legislative and regulatory framework of the 1990s - early 2000s in the field of environmental protection, environmental management, environmental security and sustainable use of natural resources. This, above all, is the Water Code, the Forest Code, and Federal Laws "On Environmental Protection", "On Ecological Expertise", "On Air Protection", "On the Internal Waters, Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone of the Russian Federation", "On Specially Protected Natural Sites", "On Payment for the Use of Water," etc. In order to implement the main provisions of the convention, a Regional Coordinating Council for the implementation of HELCOM programmes, projects and decisions was created in August 1998.

In general, in the 1990s Russia's participation in solving the Baltic Sea's environmental problems at the national level was reduced to the modest funding of some small-scale reconstruction projects, which led to the elimination of only a few hot spots. This inactivity was explained by the general weakness of the country's national environmental policy. Due to the economic crisis, priority was given to other tasks at the expense of environmental issues, and the government was pre-occupied by the alignment of the new political system and market economy.

The first federal governance structure responsible for environmental issues was created in Russia during perestroika. Along with other political structures in

⁹ "Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea – An Integrated Thematic Assessment of the Effects of Nutrient Enrichment in the Baltic Sea Region. HELCOM Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 115B , 2009, p. 77.

¹⁰ Nazarov A. Otchet o rezultatah proverki «Audit effektivnosti ispolzovanija gosudarstvennyh sredst, napravlenykh v 2002-2003 godah na realizatsiju prorpdookhrannykh meroprijatii, obespechivajushikh vypolnenie Konventsii po zashite morskoi sredy rajona Baltiiskogo morja (Helsinki) v Kaliningradskoi oblasti, Sankt-Peterburge, Leningradskoi oblasti [Report on the results of evaluation "Audit of the Effectiveness of the State Expenses Sent in 2002-2003 for the Implementation of the Environmental Measures in the framework of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki) in Kaliningrad oblast', St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast'"], p. 93-94: http://www.ach.gov.ru/userfiles/bulletins/06-buleten_doc_files-fl-1243.pdf

Russia, the institutions responsible for environmental issues have also experienced a high degree of instability during the last 20 years; the national ministry responsible for environmental issues in the Russian government was restructured five times during the first 12 years of its existence. In 2000, it was completely eliminated, and only reestablished in 2008.

In March 1988, the RSFSR State Committee for Nature Protection was established by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, which lasted until July 1990. This structure had been transformed into the RSFSR State Committee on Ecology and Environment (The State Ecological Committee), which lasted until the next change in the system of federal bodies of executive authority in July 1991. In less than a year the Ministry of Ecology and Nature of the RSFSR was converted into the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. A year later, this ministry was transformed into the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and existed as such until August 1996. At this time there was another reorganization, which resulted in the creation of two separate structures - the State Committee of Russian Federation for the Protection of the Environment and Ministry of Natural Resources. Frequent restructuring of the agencies responsible for environmental policy, and then its complete liquidation had a negative effect on the formulation and implementation of federal environmental policy. However, during the 1990s, this aspect was balanced by the fact that from November 1991 to May 2000 the leader of executive authority responsible for environmental issues was the same. Viktor Danilov-Danilyan was its undisputed leader.

The Federal Committee on Environmental Protection lasted until its liquidation in May 2000, and for eight years there was no executive authority responsible for environmental policy at the federal level. During this period the only functioning environmental body was The Public Environmental Council of the Ministry of Natural Resources. At the end of 2004 the Law "On amendments to legislative acts of the Russian Federation in connection with the extension of powers of the state authorities of the Federal subjects of the Russian Federation on the issues under joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the Federal subjects of the Russian Federation ...", was adopted and came into force on 1 January 2006. However, the contents of this Legislative Act had little in keeping with his name: the empowerment of all Russian regions had been reduced to their performance of a number of problems that were identified and controlled by the Federal Centre. These issues, however, were not a benefit, but rather a burden for the regions. In particular, Article 14 of the Act states that "the powers of public authorities of the Russian Federation on issues under joint jurisdiction undertaken by these bodies in 2005, independently from the budget of the Russian Federation (with no subsidies from the federal budget), include addressing the state environmental control of business and other activities, regardless of ownership, located on the territory of the Russian Federation, except for the objects of business other activities, which are subject to the federal state environmental control." Thus, each region should have created its own department in the executive branch responsible for the implementation of

environmental control provided that the funding for these activities should have been carried out solely by the Russian Federal budgets. Therefore it took several years to create such units in some regions. In particular, the Service for Environmental Control and Supervision in Kaliningrad oblast' was launched only in 2009.

In addition, Russia's role in international cooperation in general was rather passive during the 1990s - it merely received technical and financial support from more developed countries and international organizations. Therefore, it is understandable that the one and only successful Russian achievement with regards to Baltic Sea protection – the reconstruction of the South-West Water Treatment Plant by the water company St. Petersburg Vodokanal, completed in 2005 – was possible purely due to the funding of Western European financial institutions¹¹.

In general, although the Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation had been involved in the HELCOM activities already since 1980, Russia has not been an active player in the international process of protecting the Baltic Sea. Throughout the first post-Soviet decade, Russia was only largely involved in the preparation of a regulatory framework for Baltic Sea protection. In such a way, Russia has adapted a passive attitude towards the international Baltic Sea protection activities. The main action directions and even financial contributions to solving Russia's Baltic Sea environmental problems are implemented by international organizations.

Russia's Federal Policies on the Baltic Sea in the 2000s

But the first practical steps to improve the situation in the Baltic were taken during 2000-2009 after the Convention entered into force in 2000, the cooperation of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (hereinafter - the Ministry of Natural Resources) and HELCOM increased. In 2000 the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation checked the performance of obligations under the 1992 Convention in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad oblast. The results were communicated to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, who instructed the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Kasyanov in June 12, 2001 to accelerate the adoption of a Federal program in order to improve the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea. However, this request was never fulfilled by the Cabinet.

In 2002-2003, contacts with the HELCOM from the Russian side had been accomplished by the Ministry of Natural Resources; however, as noted above, handling environmental problems was not in the scope of activities of this institution. The Ministry did not have clearly defined responsibilities nor

¹¹ For a more detailed description of the example, see below.

competencies and authority to execute the obligations prescribed by the 1992 Convention. Nevertheless, despite this, the Russian officials participated in nine meetings with the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea during this period. The issues of harmonization of national priorities of Russia from the standpoint of Baltic Sea protection goals set by HELCOM were mostly discussed during these meetings. A meeting of Federal and Regional officials on improving the cooperation with HELCOM working groups was held at the end of January 2003.

However, despite the current agreements and written proposals HELCOM had not adapted any official documents on the coordination of the Russian ministries and departments. Consequently, none of the above mentioned activities of the Federal Government produced any practical results. Despite the order of the President of the Russian Federation, the federal program to improve the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea had not been developed (neither was the Baltic Sea "hot spots" elimination plan).

After the next EU enlargement in 2004, Russia remained the only country among the Baltic states, which was not a member of the European Union. Under these conditions, HELCOM had started to develop and approve a new strategy for the protection of the Baltic Sea – the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). On November 15th, 2007 the plan was approved by all the Baltic states, EU and Russia. Its main priorities are eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity and marine activities. The main goal of the plan was declared to be the fight against anthropogenic eutrophication by reducing nutrient emissions into the sea. The underlying principle of the solution to this problem is the adaptive management strategy aimed at reducing the negative human impact on natural processes of the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

So, during the 2000s, Russia began to participate in HELCOM work more actively. In 2007, Russia, along with other HELCOM member states, signed the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), in which each country was obliged to develop and implement its own national implementation programme. Later, during the Moscow meeting of Ministers of the Environment of HELCOM Member States in May 2010, Russia proposed its "National Program for Improvement and Rehabilitation of the Ecosystem of the Baltic Sea from 2012 to 2020"¹². To provide appropriate federal funding, the development of a specially-targeted federal programme was also announced.

The main aspects of the programmes are the reconstruction of treatment facilities, Krasny Bor landfill, the construction of a port depot in Kaliningrad and the disposal of untreated agricultural waste water in the Leningrad oblast'. The ultimate goal of the programme is the treatment of 100 per cent of waste water by 2020. According to the Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology, the total amount of allocated funding from 2011 to 2020 is 145 billion rubles (ca. €3.4

¹² http://www.helcom.fi/stc/files/BSAP/RU_NIP.pdf

billion), which includes approximately 78 billion rubles (ca. €1.8 billion) from federal funds, about 55 billion rubles (ca. €1.3 billion) from the funds of the Subjects of Federation, and roughly 12 billion rubles (ca. €0.3 billion) from extra-budgetary resources¹³. The federal programme is still under preparation by the Russian government, and its implementation is planned to begin in 2012.

The new drive in the activity of the Russian national authorities to participate in international environmental efforts is explained not by the rise in awareness as such, but by the new attitude towards international cooperation. During the 2000s, when energy prices were high, Russia's economic conditions improved and the country made active attempts to revive the high geopolitical status which it had lost during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, Russia strengthened its role within various international organizations, including HELCOM, with the aspiration of getting rid of its role as a recipient and becoming an equal partner in its relationships with other countries – especially the EU. More to the point, Russia has tried to prevent the domination of the EU in environmental issues concerning the Baltic Sea. The threat of such EU domination appeared after the last EU enlargement in 2004, when all the littoral Baltic Sea countries, except Russia, became EU member states. Under these circumstances, HELCOM is the only plausible framework for Russia's participation in international cooperation on the Baltic Sea environment - a framework Russia wishes to advance. A further situational factor explaining Russia's recent active engagement in HELCOM activities is its 2010 HELCOM presidency.

Even if practical activities at the national level have remained rather limited, at the regional level – the level of the subjects of federation – some relevant changes have taken place. As an outcome of the reform of the Russian Federation's federal structure in 2004, the competencies of state environmental control were transferred from the federal to the regional level. Consequently, Russian regions were obliged to establish their own administrative structures within their own resources. Due to financial difficulties, it took several years to create such units in some regions; for example, in the Kaliningrad oblast' the Service for Environmental Control and Supervision only started to operate in 2009.

Despite the decentralization of environmental administrations, the authorities of certain subjects of federation consider the commitment to HELCOM to be a specific responsibility of the federal centre. They have such an opinion because the federal structures sign and ratify international documents that regulate Russia's responsibility to protect the Baltic Sea. As a result, the regional authorities do not managerially and financially commit themselves to addressing the Baltic Sea environmental problems in a serious enough manner.

¹³ Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 2010: http://www.helcom.fi/stc/files/BSAP/RU_NIP.pdf

Opportunities for Public Participation in the Formulation and Implementation of Environmental Policies

The basic principles for individual citizens and civil society organizations participation in formulating and implementing the environmental policies are recorded in the Act of legislation № 7-FZ from 10.01.2002 "On Environmental Protection". Among the principles of environmental protection are:

"Public authorities of the Russian Federation, bodies of state authorities of the Federal subjects of the Russian Federation, local authorities, public and other nonprofit organizations, businesses and individuals are obliged to participate in the protection of the environment";

"To respect the right of everyone to obtain reliable information about the environment, as well as citizen participation in decisions affecting their rights to healthy environment, in accordance with the legislation";

"The participation of citizens, public and other nonprofit associations in the task of environmental protection";

"The international cooperation of the Russian Federation in the field of environmental protection" (Art. 3).

In particular, the right to "assist the state authorities of the Russian Federation, bodies of state authorities of the Federal subjects of the Russian Federation, local self-government bodies in the environmental protection matters" is listed among the NGO rights (Art. 12). In general, this legislative act considered NGOs as primarily independent players that implement their own environmental programs, carrying out environmental assessments (in accordance with the established procedures) and having the opportunity to contact the authorities for more information. There were no effective mechanisms for cooperation between the authorities and the public set by this legislative act.

Another chapter deals with the formation of ecological culture. It established a system of all inclusive and comprehensive environmental education (Art. 71); mandatory teaching of environmental awareness in educational institutions at various levels (Art. 72); mandatory training the heads of organizations and individuals responsible for the activities, which "have or likely to have a negative impact on the environment" (Art. 73) in the field of environmental protection and ecological safety. The only and very feeble way for public participation in the formulation of the federal environmental policies was The Public Environmental Council of the Ministry of Natural Resources, which is headed by the Minister of Natural Resources and his deputy.

At the same time, although the legislation foresees many opportunities for citizens to participate in the environmental policy formulation and implementation, in practice it is very weak, which is explained both by the weakness of the civil society and NGOs in general and by the specifics of the environmental policies in general and policies on the Baltic Sea in particular. It will be especially well demonstrated in this paper below, on the example of Kaliningrad oblast’.

To understand eutrophication governance in Russia, the specifics of three Baltic Sea coastal regions – the city of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad and Kaliningrad oblast’s – are now examined in more detail. Although all three cases were under consideration, one of them (Kaliningrad oblast’) was analyzed especially carefully. In this example, the main attitudes of all the actors involved in the implementation of the policy on the Baltic Sea in the region will be demonstrated and interpreted.

Regional Specifics: St. Petersburg

Of the three Russian coastal regions, St. Petersburg has achieved the most tangible results in addressing eutrophication and reducing the number of HELCOM “hot spots”. The main achievement here is the reconstruction of the South-West Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is run by the St. Petersburg Vodokanal. As a result, some parts of one of the “hot spots” were eliminated by the summer of 2009¹⁴.

Reconstruction was carried out using both federal and city funds, as well as the assistance of the EU and neighboring countries. This foreign financial assistance looks very impressive in comparison to the funding from the Russian authorities; for example, during 1991–2001, Finland invested a sum of €33 million in about 50 St. Petersburg Vodokanal projects¹⁵. In comparison, during 2002–2003, only ca. €4 million from the federal budget was spent on the implementation of commitments promised by Russia during the 1992 HELCOM Convention. The Russian government also approved the federally-targeted “Ecology and Natural Resources of Russia (2002–2010)” programme, which provided funding in order to improve the environmental situation of the Russian part of the Baltic Sea. The total budget for this programme was 27,937 million rubles (ca. €659 million), of which only 135 million rubles (ca. €3.2 million), or 0.48 per cent, came from the federal budget’s overall funds.

During 2002–2008, the reconstruction of the South-West Wastewater Treatment Plant was carried out in international cooperation with the EU and EU countries, and the project became the most important in the framework of the newly established EU-Russian Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP). The total costs were originally estimated at €128 million, of which €108 million

¹⁴ «Hot spot» № 18.

¹⁵ Ministry of the Environment of Finland, 2003

was to be provided by various EU ministries and funds¹⁶: the Ministry of Environment of Finland provided €10 million; the Swedish Agency for International Development Assistance €11 million; the Danish Environmental Protection Agency €5.8 million; the EU, under the framework of the TACIS programme (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States), €20 million; the Nordic Investment Bank provided a loan of €45 million; EBRD a loan of €42 million; and the Swedish and Finnish funds provided €5 million each. In total, the funding was about €181 million.

The St. Petersburg Vodokanal, together with the city government and EU investors, is now launching a new “Reconstruction and Modernization of Small Wastewater Treatment Facilities of St. Petersburg” project, which is planned to be completed in 2012. Its implementation would reduce phosphorus emissions by approximately 40,000 tonnes per year; plus, the Vodokanal is planning to treat 95 per cent of waste water¹⁷.

All experts agree with the positive assessment of St. Petersburg’s activities, and those of the St. Petersburg Vodokanal in particular. Furthermore, many experts acknowledge the personal factor of the Vodokanal authorities as very important in the successful modernization of treatment facilities. However, despite its best efforts, the issue of unauthorized discharge of pollutants into the Neva remains unsolved: there is still no system for the tracking and recording of illegal pollution here¹⁸.

Regional Specifics: The Leningrad Oblast’

The condition of the waste water treatment plants in the Leningrad oblast’ is still not satisfactory, and they do not solve the “hot spots” problem, which applies to all three major sources of pollution: the Syasky Pulp-and-Paper Plant, the Volkhov Aluminium Smelter and animal farming waste. The reconstruction of smaller dispersed waste water treatment facilities in the Leningrad oblast’ requires a special approach; however, neither the management nor the employees of the facilities possess the appropriate funding, knowledge or skills to carry out such work. They are also unable to prepare satisfactory business plans and renovation projects in order to apply for funding from EU financial institutions. Another problem is the lack of cooperation between the Leningrad Oblast and the city of St. Petersburg, even though their treatment facilities and environmental conditions are very closely related¹⁹.

¹⁶ Karta Sobstvennosti, 2002: <http://www.stockmap.ru/news/051003621>

¹⁷ Watermagazine.ru 17 September 2010: <http://www.watermagazine.ru/news/1770-spb-malieos>

¹⁸ See: Leakage of 76 tonnes of diesel fuel in Kolpino on 31 May 2006; water poisoning of the river Slavyanka on 3-4 June, 2010; the discharge of oil into the Neva River from the underwater collector on 3 March, 2011 (<http://ecportal.su/news.php?id=52201>; <http://ru.wikinews.org/wiki>).

¹⁹ NGO representative, Leningrad oblast’, January 2011.

However, since the mid-2000s the Leningrad oblast' authorities have implemented some regional programmes aimed at reducing the anthropogenic impact on water conditions. On December 25, 2007 the Government of the Leningrad oblast' approved a decision "On Environmental Policy of St. Petersburg in 2008 - 2012", which included a "Management and protection of water bodies" section. In 2009 the Environment Council was established under the governor of Leningrad oblast', its goal was to develop regulative recommendations on the use of recreational areas, protection of suburban forests, as well as to develop a network of reserves, recycling system, etc.

The creation of the Ingermanland Nature Reserve, with a total area of 17,900 hectares, began in 2010. The establishment of the reserve will help Russia to fulfill at least some of its international obligations to HELCOM; in 2011, HELCOM included Ingermanland in the Baltic Sea buffer zone, and according to the plan the reserve will include more than 10 per cent of the Gulf of Finland's water area²⁰. Finally, according to the National Program for the Rehabilitation and Recovery of the Baltic Sea Ecosystem, 200 treatment facilities in the Leningrad region are to be modernized. The ultimate goal of the programme is to accomplish 100% wastewater treatment by 2020. The total funding of the programme amounts to 145.8 billion rubles, including 75.9 billion rubles from the federal budget²¹. The program was launched in 2011, and at present the state of treatment facilities in the Leningrad oblast', despite some successful ventures, remains insufficient²².

Regional Specifics: The Kaliningrad Oblast'

Despite the fall in industrial and agricultural production after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the environmental situation in the Kaliningrad oblast' is still unfavourable. There is still a problem with waste water treatment facilities in Kaliningrad to this very day; the local Pregol river has become the main flow of untreated waste water, which then flows into the Baltic Sea²³.

There have been attempts to solve this problem since the mid-1990s. The city and regional authorities, together with the local water utility "Vodokanal" and the assistance of several foreign and international partners, started to develop a municipal water and waste water treatment facilities reconstruction project; but despite the fact that all the necessary documentation was prepared and the reconstruction deadlines set by early 1999, the project was never realized.

Only in recent years, following Russia's adoption of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), have some concrete results been achieved in Kaliningrad. The first

²⁰ Delovoi Peterburg 1 April 2010.

²¹ Rossiiskaya Gazeta 21 May 2010: <http://www.rg.ru/2010/05/21/clear.html>

²² <http://47news.ru/articles/33316>; <http://47news.ru/articles/33274>

²³ Schetnaya Palata RF, 2008

important action was the inclusion of the development of sanitation and solid waste utilisation facilities in the Kaliningrad oblast' into the 2009–2014 federal targeted programme; the funding is supposed to come from the federal and regional budgets, as well as from foreign investment. However, up until August 2011 the implementation of this programme had been continuing at a very slow pace. Kaliningrad has still not used the federal funds allocated for the reconstruction of water treatment facilities; and it is presently about one year behind the planned schedule.

In the other regionally-targeted programme for the Kaliningrad oblast', "The Environmental Rehabilitation of the Kaliningrad oblast' in 2008–2012", the ways of dealing with anthropogenic eutrophication are articulated more clearly. But, the regional authorities do not take full responsibility for fixing the problem; and this means that the funds for the elimination of environmental "hot spots" in the region will have to come from either foreign resources through cross-border cooperation projects or the federal budget²⁴.

In order to understand better the reasons of such difficult and still unsuccessful attempts to solve the problems of environmental protection in Kaliningrad oblast', we have analyzed the interviews of the regional and local representatives of authorities, scientific communities and NGOs in more detail. We have evaluated how and why the experts assess the crucial environmental problems in the Kaliningrad oblast' in general and anthropological eutrophication in particular, which solutions the experts and policy-makers see for the problems of the Baltic Sea in the region and how they evaluate the problems which hinder the implementation of the available solutions²⁵.

Expert Assessment of the Environmental Problems in the Kaliningrad Oblast'

Despite the industrial downturn and agricultural recession following the collapse of the USSR, the environmental situation in the region is still unfavorable. Experts believe that the main threats to the environment are solid waste disposal sites, lack of modern waste water treatment facilities, air pollution, and the overfertilisation of rivers and water bodies with nutrients.

Although, the shoreline of the Kaliningrad oblast' is not of great length, the Baltic Sea is much polluted in that area. A serious problem is the vessel source pollution of sea water and coastal zones. The Department of Sea and Continental Shelf Supervision and Offshore Operation Control of the North-

²⁴ Representatives of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

²⁵ The results of the empirical research in Kaliningrad in September 2009 are also presented in the article: Nechiporuk D., Nozhenko M. The Problems of the Protection of the Baltic Sea in the Regions of the Russian Federation: The Example of the Kaliningrad Region, in: *The Baltic Region*, 2010, № 2, p. 122-130. (available in English and in Russian).

Western Federal District, being a branch of the Federal Supervisory Natural Resources Management Service was founded in 2006 in order to tackle this problem. In 2006-2009, the principal area of activity of the Department was the establishment of control over the use of vessels and natural resources.

One of the respondents claimed that the Department had managed to deal with water pollution and illegal discharge of ballast water and sewage in the harbor and protected water areas: “They stubbornly pushed for the implementation of all international agreements and all Helsinki recommendations regarding the vessel-source pollution. I have to say, there is some success in this field. The vessel-source oil production discharge was ongoing; bilge was leaking out all the time. But today, thanks to the efforts of the maritime authorities, ship-owners are kept under control”²⁶. “The marine inspection does a lot, I think. They are good at establishing control”²⁷.

A regional level structure – the Environmental Control and Supervisory Service – was established in 2009, and it is still early to estimate its efficacy. Thus, the experts mentioned the activity of the Kaliningrad Supervision department as an example of the only consistent implementation of the HELCOM recommendations by the authorities.

Triggers for the Recognition of Environmental Problems in the Kaliningrad Oblast’

The analysis of expert interviews showed that the main triggers for the recognition of the anthropogenous eutrophication problem in Kaliningrad oblast’ were the international factor and the unique geopolitical position of the region. It was international specialists who stimulated the discussion on solving the regional environmental problems: “Great help with environmental projects in the Kaliningrad oblast’ has been always offered by the Swedish and Danish partners. Today, Germans help a lot too”²⁸.

In the framework of the EU TACIS and INTERREG programmes, the BERNET (Baltic Eutrophication Regional Network) and BERNET Catch projects were implemented in the Kaliningrad oblast’. They were aimed to improve and maintain the quality of water in the Baltic Sea area. An action plan for the Baltic Sea eutrophication reduction for the Kaliningrad oblast’ was drawn up on the basis of the results of the joint activities. However, it was not approved by the regional government²⁹.

²⁶ Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

²⁷ Representative of an NGO in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

²⁸ Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

²⁹ Alexeev F. Water Resources Management in the Kaliningrad oblast’; Expedience and Perspectives of Applying the Principles and Norms of the EU Water Frame Directive //

The scientific community played an important role in the recognition of environmental problems. For the Kaliningrad oblast', it is a typical situation when scholars formulate the main problems related to marine protection. A number of research projects, the results of which were later published, were supported by international foundations. Partially, the research was financed by the Russian federal and regional administrative authorities. Besides, the LUKOIL company has actively supported environmental research. As one of the respondents mentioned, "as to the environmental assessment, there is only one project I know of; it's fairly good. It's the environmental activity of LUKOIL"³⁰.

Assessment of Anthropogenous Eutrophication in the Kaliningrad Oblast'

Anthropogenous eutrophication affects, first of all, the Curonain and Vistula Lagoons, where the concentration of nutrients constantly exceeds the maximum acceptable value. The increase in peat concentration in lagoons results from the high level of pollution of the largest regional rivers – the Neman and the Pregolya – the two rivers untreated city sewage water is discharged to and then brought to the Baltic Sea. It has already affected the Baltic Sea ecosystem, in particular, the biota of the Curonain Lagoon³¹.

Nevertheless, not all of the Kaliningrad experts considered anthropogenous eutrophication a major regional problem. For instance, the respondents mentioned that "the region does not heavily contribute to the nutrient pollution of the sea"³². At the same time, they added that the problem of eutrophication "is more environmentally-political, than purely political"³³.

Predominantly, experts point out that the lack of a modern sewage water treatment system in most regional towns and in Kaliningrad is the main reason for eutrophication. The role of agriculture in the generation of nutrient waste was considered insignificant by most respondents, since there are neither large farms, nor cultivated areas in the region.

Transboundary Waters and Basins in the South-East Baltic (ed. B. Chubarenko). Kaliningrad, 2008, p. 170-173.

³⁰ Representative of a scientific community in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

³¹ Nazarov A. Otchet o rezultatah proverki «Audit effektivnosti ispolzovanija gosudarstvennyh sredst, napravlenykh v 2002-2003 godah na realizatsiju prorpdokhrannykh meroprijatii, obespechivajushikh vypolnenie Konventsii po zashite morskoi sredy rajona Baltiiskogo morja (Helsinki) v Kaliningradskoi oblasti, Sankt-Peterburge, Leningradskoi oblasti [Report on the results of evaluation "Audit of the Effectiveness of the State Expenses Sent in 2002-2003 for the Implementation of the Environmental Measures in the framework of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki) in Kaliningrad oblast', St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast'"], p. 100: http://www.ach.gov.ru/userfiles/bulletins/06-buletен_doc_files-fl-1243.pdf

³² Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

³³ Representative of a scientific community in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

Solutions to the Problem of Anthropogenous Eutrophication

Most experts believe that the solution to the problem lies in the construction of modern waste water treatment facilities. Most representatives of the authorities and scientific community saw this approach as a technical task to be handled by specialists: “Of course, it’s for specialists to decide... if the sewage from detached buildings nitrogen and phosphorus, a specialists should deal with it: there is a need for waste water treatment facilities”³⁴. An important outcome of this approach is that the respondents approved of the Baltic Sea Action Plan: “the HELCOM plan is a victory of the scientific approach, it is written in the language of clear recommendations. It says by how many per cent and which territory or which country should reduce the discharge... It is not just the political motto of the 1990s: everybody should the 50% reduction!”³⁵.

Assessment of the Governmental Measures for the Protection of the Baltic Sea

Today, two principal target programmes of the federal and regional levels are in effect in the region, one of the objectives of which is to prevent further pollution of the Baltic Sea. The federal target programme for the development of the Kaliningrad oblast’ until 2014 stipulates the waste water treatment facilities should be put in operation and both sewage treatment and water supply system modernized. According to the programme, the towns and villages of the regions are just 5%–8% equipped with biological sewage treatment systems. However, the principal objective of the treatment facility construction and the sewage and water supply system modernization, from the perspective of the authors of the programme, is to boost the investment appeal of the region rather than to respond to the concerns of the citizens³⁶. The experts said that the programme could significantly contribute to the solution to the problem of anthropogenous eutrophication through the construction of waste water treatment facilities. Nevertheless, the economic crisis may become a serious obstacle: “Today, the solution is being put off, there is a good excuse: we’re facing the crisis. Less federal money is being allocated”³⁷.

“The Environmental Improvement of the Territory of the Kaliningrad oblast’ in 2008 – 2012” programme more clearly outlines the ways to do away with anthropogenous eutrophication³⁸. It is worth mentioning that the region does not

³⁴ Representative of the federal authorities in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

³⁵ Representative of a scientific community in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

³⁶ The draft of the Federal Targeted Programme of the Development of Kaliningrad Oblast’ until 2014 года:

http://www.economy.gov.ru/minec/activity/sections/concuration/concreg/doc091230_1852

³⁷ Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

³⁸ “The Environmental Improvement of the Territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast’ in 2008 – 2012” Programme: <http://economy.gov39.ru/programmnyaya-deyatelnost/celevye-programmy/>

take full responsibility for handling this problem. On the contrary, all measures should be introduced in the framework of cross-border cooperation, one of the principal avenues <...>, according to the programme, is the implementation of the recommendations of the Helsinki Convention of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area of 1992. It means that the elimination of environmental hot spots should be funded either from abroad or in the framework of cross-border cooperation, or from the federal budget through subventions. This situation owes a lot to the fact that “all obligations within Helsinki Convention are government's responsibility”. Moscow has always emphasized the fact that it is them, people in command, who decide what and where to finance... Territories just did not have the right to develop their own programmes to fulfill the Helsinki obligations”³⁹.

The Programme includes all nine hot spots in the Kaliningrad oblast' listed in the HELCOM plan (clause 95): 1) the monitoring of the environmental situation; 2) the development and adoption of a set of measures to stimulate economic entities to improve the environmental situation; 3) a more active use of joint forms of cooperation with cross-border partners, namely, conferences, workshops, round tables, and forums in order to discuss the efficacy of the implemented measures for the elimination of pollution spots (clause 96)⁴⁰.

The prospects for the federal subsidies raise the same concerns as the federal target programme does. Lack of attention to the environmental problem may negatively affect the development of certain areas of cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, Russia, as well as other Baltic countries, is developing a national plan for the protection of marine environment, which should be presented at the ministerial HELCOM meeting in Moscow in May 2010. It was initially planned to draw up a special strategy for the Kaliningrad region alongside the national one. However, it did not take place due to two reasons. Firstly, on 2008, at the beginning of the development of the plan, the system of executive bodies of the Kaliningrad region lacked a body responsible for the environmental policy. Secondly, the environmental Control and Supervisory Service established in the Kaliningrad region, with its limited number of employees, considers the drawing up of a region plan an impossible and unnecessary task: “It's totally unworkable thing and unnecessary too”⁴¹.

In general, representatives of the scientific community and NGOs are quite critical of the executive bodies of the Kaliningrad region. The level of criticism varied from accusing the government of their total idleness- “I've never heard about the regional government touch[ing] the topic of the pollution of the Baltic Sea in Kaliningrad and other cities”⁴² - to regrets - that “I don't know of any

³⁹ Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

⁴⁰ “The Environmental Improvement of the Territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast' in 2008 – 2012” Programme: <http://economy.gov39.ru/programmaya-deyatelnost/celevye-programmy/>

⁴¹ Representative of the Kaliningrad regional authorities, September 2009.

⁴² Representative of an NGO in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

comprehensive improvements like the construction of waste water treatment facilities”⁴³.

So, the Kaliningrad oblast’ does not have a clear action plan aimed to solve the problems of the Baltic Sea. The regional administrative bodies think that, since Russia assumed the obligations within the Helsinki Convention, it is the federal centre to develop a set of measures and finance their implementation. It is possible that this factor determined the long-standing absence of a specific body responsible for the environmental issues on the regional level. Secondly, the shifting of responsibility to the federal centre affected the relations of the principal actors involved in solving the environmental problems of the Kaliningrad oblast’.

General Challenges of Eutrophication Policy

In the period from 1992 to 2011, only 15 of the 34 “hotspots” listed by HELCOM were eliminated; 14 of them were removed as a result of the reconstruction of treatment facilities in St. Petersburg, and the last one ceased to exist in the Kaliningrad oblast’ due to a complete halt in pulp-and-paper production as a result of bankruptcy⁴⁴. Thus far, Russia has not made any substantial progress in reducing the eutrophication problems within its territory.

Despite the involvement of Russia in HELCOM activities from the very beginning, its own input to the Baltic Sea protection activities has not been consistent. During the 1990s, the country underwent socio-economic difficulties and political instabilities, and there was a great deal of turbulence within its environmental administrations. Furthermore, in the 2000s other priorities have undermined environmental activities related to the Baltic Sea; as a consequence, the improvement of waste water treatment facilities in the St. Petersburg Vodokanal has been the only real contribution to the elimination of anthropogenic sources of eutrophication. In the remaining two coastal regions of Russia (the Kaliningrad and Leningrad oblast’s), no substantial progress has been achieved.

Such a complex situation, on the one hand, is caused by such infrastructure problems as the lack of modern water treatment facilities, as well as industrial enterprises. On the other hand, it can be explained by Russia’s exceptional geopolitical status as the only non-EU Baltic Sea country, as well as by the constant reorganization of the federal government structures responsible for environmental issues, which continue to break the continuity of environmental policies.

Despite their willingness to fulfill Russia’s commitment to the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea, the Russian authorities have not been able to overcome certain systemic deficiencies that adversely affect the efficiency and quality of commitment implementation. The first reason for this is that the

⁴³ Representative of a scientific community in Kaliningrad, September 2009.

⁴⁴ “List of the JCP Hot Spots in the Baltic Sea catchment area”, HELCOM, 2011.

regional structures responsible for environmental policies in coastal areas are weak. These structures consider commitments to HELCOM to be primarily the responsibility of the federal government, not the level of subjects of federation. Second, there is a lack of coordination among the various levels of administration involved in the protection of the Baltic Sea; examples of which can be found in the reconstruction of treatment facilities in the various regions. Moreover, both the federal and regional levels are missing an effective environmental monitoring system. A third factor is that there is no sufficient knowledge or technology that is needed to reconstruct the waste water treatment facilities in the Kaliningrad and, particularly, Leningrad oblast's. Last but not least, civil society and NGOs in general are weak and the overall level of public awareness about the state of the Baltic Sea is low, which implies that there is a gap between the state authorities, the mass media, the scientific community, civil society institutions and public opinion.

The last point mentioned above is connected to the fact that despite the clear improvement of the economic situation in Russia – in comparison to the 1990s – in the 2000s the environmental civic initiatives have received no support from the state or the business community. In addition, the geopolitical ambitions of Russian leaders have led to a significant reduction in foreign foundations and organizations' activities in the country. As a result, the yet underdeveloped civil society institutions have become even weaker, meaning public influence on policy-making in all fields, including the environment, is still very low. At the same time, there are some local NGOs, like Ecodefense in Kaliningrad and Friends of the Baltic and Greenpeace in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad oblast' who tend to engage in dialogue with the government and try to make sure that Russia takes the HELCOM recommendations into account. Drawing public education campaigns from time to time, the NGOs have no direct aim of involving people in the process of putting pressure on the government. The problem of the anthropogenic eutrophication of the Baltic Sea is understood by them to be an educational tool, which they use in the hope that their efforts will make people develop a more responsible attitude towards the environment.

Conclusions

The coastal strip of the Baltic Sea in Russia is very small, but is very much polluted and therefore important in the whole of the problem. Despite the involvement of Russia in HELCOM activities from the very beginning, its own input to Baltic Sea protection activities of the organization was not consistent. The reconstruction of the treatment facilities of St. Petersburg was the only real contribution to the elimination of anthropogenic sources of eutrophication.

Despite their willingness to fulfill its international commitments to improve the environment of the Baltic Sea, the Russian authorities have not been able to overcome some systemic problems including the following:

- weakness of the regional structures responsible for the implementation of the environmental policies in coastal areas. These structures consider commitments to HELCOM primarily as the responsibilities of the federal government, but not of the level of subjects of federation;
- lack of coordination among the various levels involved in the protection of the Baltic Sea, including the reconstruction of treatment facilities in the regions;
- lack of an effective system of environmental monitoring at both federal and regional levels;
- lack of knowledge and technologies for the reconstruction of treatment facilities;
- weakness of civil society and NGOs in general, and its impact on the environmental policy of Russia in particular which also has a negative impact on the overall level of public awareness about the state of the Baltic Sea and environmental problems in general;
- a gap between state authorities, mass media, scientific community, civil society institutions and public opinion in general.

It is very difficult to make some prognoses about future Russian policies and whether Russia will really fulfill its obligations and commitments to HELCOM. Much will depend on how Russia will survive the global financial crisis and how the new presidential period will be characterized. Environmental and foreign policy will most evidently change as a result of the parliamentary and presidential elections taking place in December 2011 and March 2012, respectively. Even though it is very probable that the current party in power will stay, some changes will be carried out both in regard to the persons in government and policy character. However, due to the very probable return of Vladimir Putin to the presidential post, it is improbable that the problems of government efficiency, civil society development and public awareness will be solved. If he continues to strengthen his vertical power, environmental problems will stay unsolved because the vertical of power cannot be efficient in policy sectors rooted in localities such as environmental policy.



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