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Government Resolution on

Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

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Government Resolution on Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

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Abstract

This document covers the strategic priorities of Finland's Baltic Sea policy. The aim was to determine the direction in which Finland wants to develop the Baltic Sea Region in the near future at a global level, in its EU policy, through regional cooperation, and through its own policies and actions. According to its vision, a healthy Baltic Sea with its vital marine life is a well-protected and sustainably used resource. The Baltic Sea Region actively develops its know-how and uses its resources as a forerunner in sustainable development. The Baltic Sea Region is stable and safe. Finland works actively to make the Baltic Sea Region a global leader in the bioeconomy and the circular economy, at the cutting edge of utilising new technologies and producing model solutions for safe and clean shipping and the maritime industry.

The strategy presents forward-looking actions and policy initiatives or guidelines, which also aim to address any shortcomings in the implementation of currently effective action programmes and legislation while stepping up their implementation. At the same time, the strategy also outlines Finland's national key actions stemming from the priorities, in order to promote the Baltic Sea's good environmental status, safety and security and sustainable development, improve the Baltic Sea Region's competitiveness, and ensure Finland's prosperity. The strategy also presents changes and challenges in the region as well as the opportunities they can provide. The deterioration of the security-policy situation in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region is acknowledged, but the strategy does not outline Finland's security policy since Finland's aims and methods for strengthening security in the Baltic Sea Region are already presented in the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy (2016). This strategy concentrates on maritime and aviation safety and inter-agency cooperation in eg. emergency operations and fighting cross-border crime.

The strategy also presents Finland's aims for EU policies for the Baltic Sea. The role of local and regional governments and civil society is emphasized.

In autumn 2016 the Prime Minister's Office set up a steering group for Baltic Sea and integrated maritime policy to perform the task to update Government's report to Parliament Challenges of the Baltic Sea and on Baltic Sea Policy (2009). The steering group decided to update the report as the Government Resolution on Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region similarly to the Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region (2013). In the preparation of this strategy priorities were selected with due consideration given to the views expressed in the written opinions issued by stakeholders and at an event organised by the Finnish Delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

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Tiivistelmä

Strategia kattaa Suomen Itämeri-politiikan strategiset painopisteet. Sillä määritellään, mihin suuntaan Suomi tahtoo lähitulevaisuudessa Itämeren aluetta kehittää kansainvälisesti, EU-politiikassa, alueellisessa yhteistyössä sekä omilla linjauksillaan ja toimillaan. Vision mukaan puhdas Itämeri ja elinvoimainen meriluonto ovat turvattu ja kestävästi hyödynnetty voimavara. Itämeren alue kasvattaa osaamistaan ja hyödyntää resurssejaan toimien kestävän kehityksen edelläkävijänä. Itämeren alue on vakaa ja turvallinen. Suomi toimii aktiivisesti, jotta Itämeren alue on maailmanlaajuinen edelläkävijä bio- ja kiertotaloudessa, uuden teknologian hyödyntämisessä sekä innovatiivisten malliratkaisujen tuottamisessa turvalliseen ja puhtaaseen merenkulkuun ja meriteollisuuteen.

Strategiassa esitetään tulevaisuuteen suuntaavia sekä nykyistä toteutusta vauhdittavia toimia ja politiikka-aloitteita tai linjauksia. Lisäksi linjataan Suomen omia keskeisiä toimenpiteitä Itämeren hyvän tilan sekä turvallisuuden ja kestävän kehityksen edistämiseksi, Itämeren alueen kilpailukyvyn parantamiseksi ja Suomen hyvinvoinnin turvaamiseksi. Strategiassa arvioidaan toimintaympäristön muutoksia ja haasteita sekä niiden tuomia mahdollisuuksia. Turvallisuustilanteen heikentyminen todetaan mutta varsinaista turvallisuuspolitiikkaa ei strategiassa käsitellä, koska sitä on jo käsitelty hallituksen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisessa selonteossa. Tämän strategian näkökulma koskee meri- ja lentoturvallisuutta sekä viranomaisyhteistyötä mm. pelastusalalla ja rikollisuuden torjunnassa.

Strategiassa linjataan myös tavoitteita EU:n Itämeri-politiikalle ja korostetaan maakuntien, kaupunkien ja kansalaisjärjestöjen tärkeää roolia Itämeri-yhteistyössä.

Valtioneuvoston kanslia asetti syksyllä 2016 Itämeri- ja yhdennetyn meripolitiikan ohjausryhmän, jonka yhtenä tehtävänä oli päivittää vuonna 2009 eduskunnalle annettu selonteko *Itämeren haasteet ja Itämeri-politiikka*. Ohjausryhmä päätyi valmistelemaan valtioneuvoston periaatepäätöksen Suomen Itämeren alueen strategiasta rinnastaen sen näin Suomen arktiseen strategiaan. Strategian valmistelussa on otettu huomioon sidosryhmien kirjallisissa lausunnoissa sekä eduskunnan Itämeri-valtuuskunnan tilaisuudessa esitettyjä näkemyksiä.

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Contents

FOREWORD

This document covers the strategic priorities of Finland's Baltic Sea policy. The aim was to determine the direction in which Finland wants to develop the Baltic Sea Region in the near future at a global level, in its EU policy, through regional cooperation, and through its own policies and actions. According to its vision, a healthy Baltic Sea with its vital marine life is a well-protected and sustainably used resource. The Baltic Sea Region actively develops its know-how and uses its resources as a forerunner in sustainable development. The Baltic Sea Region is stable and safe. Finland works actively to make the Baltic Sea Region a global leader in the bioeconomy and the circular economy and a well-connected, innovative, competitive, at the cutting edge of utilising new technologies and producing model solutions for safe and clean shipping, the maritime industry, and sustainable use of the marine environment.

The strategy presents forward-looking actions and policy initiatives or guidelines, which also aim to address any shortcomings in the implementation of currently effective action programmes and legislation while stepping up their implementation. Finland promotes its Baltic Sea objectives within the framework of international agreements, the European Union, and the Baltic Sea Region's organisations and cooperation structures. At the same time, the strategy also outlines Finland's national key actions stemming from the priorities, in order to promote the Baltic Sea's good environmental status, safety and security and sustainable development, improve the Baltic Sea Region's competitiveness, and ensure Finland's prosperity. Achievement of the objectives set out in Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will be reported and monitored by a steering group appointed by the Prime Minister's Office and, when necessary, in the Government's strategy review sessions.

The Baltic Sea Region's security is discussed in the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy (2016). Finland has adopted and is already implementing several other reports, strategies, programmes and measures with effects that share significant interfaces with this Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The continuation of their implementation in tandem with the strategy is essential in terms of effectiveness and the progress already made. The actions mentioned in Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will be imple-

Figure 1. The Baltic Sea catchment area.

mented within the framework of the decisions on central government spending limits and the appropriations and person-years specified in state budgets. Due to the nature of different sectors, the proposals for measures vary in terms of their levels of detail.

In the spring of 2009, Government submitted to Parliament a report entitled *Challenges of the Baltic Sea and on Baltic Sea Policy*. As many of its objectives have already been achieved, the Finnish government decided to update the report. In November 2016, the Prime Minister's Office set up a steering group for Baltic Sea and integrated maritime policy to perform this task. The report is updated as the Government Resolution on Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Strategy preparation was launched with a consultation, while priorities were selected with due consideration also given to the views expressed in the written opinions issued by stakeholders and at an event organised by the Finnish Delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

The Baltic Sea Region refers to a geographical area with a population of about 90 million people that surrounds the Baltic Sea, plus the sea itself. The region covers the northern parts of Germany and the northwestern parts of Russia, as well as Belarus.

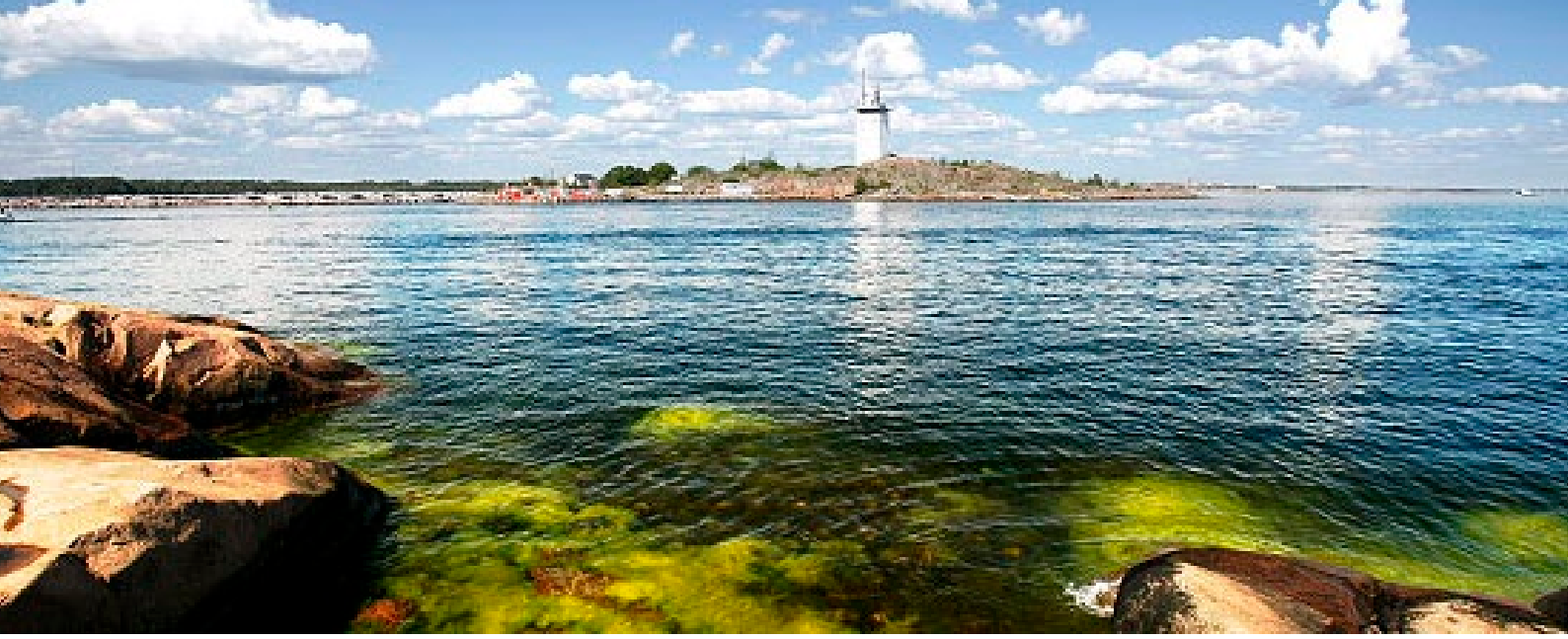
From challenges to opportunities: description of the operating environment

Over the next few years, the Baltic Sea Region will face various pressures for change, which will call for a proactive approach, adaptable and economically sustainable societies, and international and regional cooperation. Uncertainty has increased. In the midst of change, the responsibilities of regional and local governments, various organisations, companies and citizens regarding sustainable development within the Baltic Sea Region will become increasingly pronounced alongside the role of national governments.

The Baltic Sea Region is subject to many **international agreements and commitments**, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the objectives of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the conventions of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Baltic Sea countries are generally strong supporters of the international treaty system. A key instrument among the international agreements concerning the Baltic Sea is the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention).

Many **European Union policies** have a significant impact on the Baltic Sea and the region. Finland is contributing to those in collaboration with other EU Member States within the Baltic Sea Region. **The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** was adopted in 2009 and its key objectives are saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity. Within the framework of the strategy, extensive networks have been created for different fields within the Baltic Sea Region, while carrying out hundreds of practical projects. Environmental projects important for the Baltic Sea have also been implemented through cooperation within the Northern Dimension.

The role of the European Union's **macro-regional cooperation** will increase, in particular if EU integration begins to slow down and diverge. Cooperation may deepen integration and its practical orientation may help to bring the European Union closer to citizens, thus enhancing its legitimacy.



From the shores of the Baltic Sea. Photo: The Office of the President of the Republic of Finland

Strengths of the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea Region has plenty of strengths, which help it adapt to change. The region's societies are characterised by **stability**, while their populations are, on average, **well-educated**, and **welfare differentials** between their citizens are not considerably pronounced. The states are **agile** in terms of deployment of new technologies. A third of the EU's leading **innovation areas** are located around the Baltic Sea. Baltic Sea countries have been remarkably successful in securing funding for the EU's Horizon 2020 Programme projects and LIFE integrated projects for research, development and innovation.

Baltic Sea countries have a long **tradition of mutual cooperation**, as evidenced by examples such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), and many official and research networks. The countries are bound together by cultural affinity, while the region's companies and numerous expert networks also produce solutions to global problems. Pooling the resources of the countries and networking of innovative companies offer plenty of opportunities. Finland has a lot of resources to offer in this respect, including a comprehensive education system; sustainable use of natural resources; energy, material and water efficiency; biofuel development; combined heat and power production; use of digitalisation and intelligent technologies; and a world-class maritime industry. More than a third of Finland's public investments in research and development (R&D) go towards clean technologies (cleantech).

The Baltic Sea is at the core of the cultural heritage of people living on its islands and coasts. The Baltic Sea provides **ecosystem services** that are essential to mental and physical wellbeing. Baltic Sea ecosystem services make it possible to enjoy cottage holidays, swimming and moving about on the waters, ice and coasts, engaging in various forms of recreational use of the Baltic Sea. Development of tourism to the region is also based on the use of these ecosystem services.

Challenges of the Baltic Sea region

Good environmental status is yet to be achieved in the marine environment. The environmental status reflects human action on land and at sea: agriculture is currently the most significant source of **nutrient loading** and the internal nutrient reserves maintain a cycle of eutrophication, while land-based **plastic litter, drug residues and environmental toxins** also accumulate in the sea and marine life. Specific challenges for the Baltic Sea include changes in its flora and fauna, homogenisation of marine life and decline of biodiversity. Good marine environmental status reflects the sustainability of human action.

Global warming is making rapid progress in northern areas, and the Baltic Sea Region has been projected to warm up by 2–4 degrees by the end of the century. As the water and air warm up, ice conditions will change, which will affect shipping, fishing, as well as distribution of marine life. Precipitation will increase, which means that attention should be given to flood protection, stormwater management and nutrient-retentive landscaping in coastal areas and catchment areas of rivers. While Finland and other Baltic Sea countries are committed to reducing their emissions, they still need to be ready to adapt to the effects of climate change. Combating climate change also presents major challenges for **energy policy**, where Finland's target is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Finland is dependent on maritime transport. Due to long distances, logistics costs are higher in Finland than elsewhere in Europe. A specific challenge is presented by the costs of shipping and the needs of winter navigation, as well as the emission reductions in shipping and other modes of transport required to combat climate change. Safe and well-functioning transport and communications networks across and around the Baltic Sea are a prerequisite for the prosperity of the region.

Urbanisation and negative migration rates in rural areas are characteristic of the entire Baltic Sea Region. While dynamic, sustainable and cosmopolitan urban areas are necessary, the bioeconomy and multifunctional entrepreneurship based on new innovations also need vibrant rural areas and good logistics and communications services.

Most Baltic Sea countries face a major challenge for public finances due to permanently unfavourable **demographic trends**. Growth and employment measures must be directed in a proactive and balanced manner, in order to maintain regional vitality, operating capacity and competitiveness and prevent social exclusion. In the future, the Baltic Sea Region may perhaps face increasing internal pressures for labour mobility and migration. The region also needs to prepare for immigration as a result of international conflicts and global crises.

Slow world GDP growth has affected the Baltic Sea Region, which previously enjoyed a boost from globalisation. Private investments in industrialised countries are widely below

the long-term trend, while decreasing export prices have also manifested in weak demand. Unemployment is only decreasing slowly in several industrialised countries, and trade policies are showing global signs of protectionist tendencies. These trends will bring challenges to the Baltic Sea Region's relatively small and open economies with their ageing labour markets. Furthermore, technological developments and automation will also affect employment.

The security-policy situation in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region has deteriorated. Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and created a conflict in eastern Ukraine. As a result, military tensions have also increased in the Baltic Sea Region, while uncertainty has spread even more widely. The change in the military operating environment and geopolitical tensions have also been reflected in Baltic Sea cooperation to some extent, reducing interaction with Russia. Regional and cross-border cooperation and activities to promote people-to-people contacts are still going on almost normally. Nevertheless, the funding restrictions resulting from EU sanctions have prevented efforts such as implementing new Northern Dimension environmental cooperation projects in Russia. Baltic Sea countries have frozen military cooperation with Russia almost completely, but it is important to continue dialogue to maintain open lines of communication and minimise risks. Transatlantic and NATO-related defence cooperation has increased as a result of the change in the operating environment, as has cooperation between Nordic countries and, in particular, between Finland and Sweden. The European Union's intensifying activity in the field of security and defence policy may be particularly helpful in countering hybrid and cyber threats in Baltic Sea countries.

National tones averse to internationalism have increased, while political polarisation has become acute, hindering decision making in societies.

Increasing maritime transport and, in particular, transport of oil and dangerous substances, as well as new fuels and chemicals present new challenges for **maritime safety** in the Baltic Sea. Prevention of and development and maintenance of preparedness for spills due to maritime accidents call for both national contributions and cooperation between the region's countries.

Threats to **civil security** in the region are also caused by cross-border crime, human trafficking and disaster risks. Society's vital functions and their protection are facing increasing cyber threats as part of the means of hybrid influence. Likewise, there are efforts to direct social debate and its contents by means of information operations. These developments also affect citizens' everyday lives and sense of security.

The funding priorities of various EU policies are facing pressures to change. In this context, **the EU's cohesion policy funding may decrease**. Funding channelled through the European Union is important for regional development in Baltic Sea states and for solving common problems in the region.

Archipelago in the Åland Islands. Photo: Visit Finland

Opportunities of the Baltic Sea Region

Blue growth based on the seas and internal waters and their natural resources has as-yet untapped potential. Efforts to achieve the emission reduction targets set for shipping also present an opportunity for blue growth in Finland's maritime industry and cleantech and marine expertise. The **blue bioeconomy** opens up opportunities to discover new products and services and to also develop and increase relevant expertise to export as an answer to global challenges. Sustainable use of natural resources and the good status of aquatic and marine environments could create a strong foundation for the bioeconomy. Aquaculture and fisheries would benefit from the Baltic Sea's good environmental status.

Finland and the Baltic Sea Region have widely recognised **opportunities for the bioeconomy and the circular economy**. It is necessary to effect a significant change in economic thinking, procedures and methods towards the bioeconomy and the circular economy. The Baltic Sea region is well positioned to do so, as two thirds of the EU's forest resources, for example, are located in this region and promotion of the circular economy is off to a good start. Combined, the bioeconomy and the circular economy make it possible to contribute to addressing the environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea.

Connecting to energy grids in the Baltic Sea Region increases **energy and supply security**. At the same time, the Baltic Sea Region has plenty of opportunities to make use of renewable energy and increase energy efficiency.

Through development of transport and communications services, Finland might become a physical **transport and telecommunications node** for the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions. **Digitalisation** and automation can be utilised to improve the efficiency, safety and environmental performance of transport.

The Baltic Sea Region has led the way in terms of **maritime safety and inter-agency cooperation** – and it should also continue to do so moving forward.

Furthermore, the Baltic Sea Region hosts plenty of **innovative, networked and growth-oriented businesses**, which know how to meet regional and global demand and make use of new technologies while being able to secure the region's competitiveness. The region has also been long involved in developing environmentally clean solutions.

The Baltic Sea Region's development is linked to that of the Arctic region. Bringing the European Union's Baltic Sea and Arctic policies closer together will offer plenty of opportunities in areas such as maritime safety and environmental protection, while supporting the EU's Northern Dimension policy. Solutions developed to address challenges in the Baltic Sea Region may also be applied in the Arctic region and vice versa.

Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

VISION

A healthy Baltic Sea with its vital marine life is a well-protected and sustainably used resource. The Baltic Sea Region actively develops its know-how and uses its resources as a forerunner of sustainable development. The Baltic Sea Region is stable and safe.

FINLAND WORKS ACTIVELY TO MAKE THE BALTIC SEA REGION

- A global leader in the bioeconomy and the circular economy
- Well-connected, innovative, competitive and at the cutting edge of utilising new technologies
- A producer of model solutions for safe and clean shipping, the maritime industry, and sustainable use of the marine environment.

From challenges to opportunities

Sustainable blue growth	• Good marine environmental status as a basis for sustainability • Marine know-how and capacity	• Maritime industries • Blue bioeconomy • Tourism • Maritime spatial planning
Bioeconomy and circular economy	• Nutrient recycling • Well-managed material cycles	• Plastics and marine litter • Hazardous substances • Renewable energy
Connecting Finland to the Baltic Sea Region	• Logistics and transport • Connectivity in communications	• Smart grids • Security of supply
Safe and secure Baltic Sea Region	• Comprehensive security model • Active maritime and aviation safety	• Civil security • Efficient inter-agency cooperation
Innovations and competitiveness	• Networks of SMEs and start-up accelerators • Digitalisation	• Research and education
International impact and cooperation	• The Baltic Sea Region as a strong global pioneer • Active in the EU; EUSBSR, ND, funding of regional and cross-border cooperation	• Cooperation forums (CBSS, HELCOM, NCM) • Cooperation with regional and local governments and civil society

Sustainable blue growth and blue bioeconomy

Sustainable blue growth and the blue bioeconomy aim to achieve sustainable economic growth tapping into the seas and internal waters and their natural resources. This involves new technological, production and service business solutions relating to sustainable development and energy and environmental business activities. Furthermore, blue growth also comprises sectors directly or indirectly linked to the seas, such as the maritime industry. Companies are responsible for know-how and success in the Finnish maritime industry, while the public sector and higher education institutions create conditions for their business activities.

Good marine environmental status as a prerequisite for sustainable blue growth

The good status of the marine environment, vital marine life and biodiversity are prerequisites for sustainable use of the sea and its natural resources. Use can be considered sustainable when it does not degrade the marine environment or jeopardise the vitality of marine life or the diversity of species and habitats, and when the marine environmental status has been classified as good. Achieving good status in the marine environment calls for contributions to actively implement the effective environmental obligations and objectives. Cooperation between the Baltic coastal states plays a key role when protection objectives and measures are being decided.

- The measures adopted by the Finnish government for the management of water and marine resources[1] will be implemented by the end of 2021, while action programmes will be updated for the 2022–2027 period.

1 Management of water and marine resources (in Finnish): http://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Vaikuta_vesiin

The Baltic Sea beneath the surface. Photo: Jan Ekebom

- Up-to-date information will be published about the progress made in implementing the measures for the management of water and marine resources.
- Public funding will be channelled more efficiently into the most important targets in terms of water protection.
- An ecologically representative and well-connected network of protected areas will be maintained and developed.
- A total load model of Finland's coastal areas will be produced for use by the authorities.

Information on developments in the marine environmental status is obtained through continuous monitoring and modelling efforts. Finland's marine monitoring system is described in the monitoring programme of the Finnish marine strategy, which defines responsibilities and the locations where the relevant information is to be stored.

- The status of Finland's marine environment will be assessed in 2018, taking the results of HELCOM's State of the Baltic Sea report into account.
- The monitoring programme for the Finnish marine strategy (2014–2020) will be implemented and it will be updated during 2020. The Joint Monitoring System for the Baltic Sea will be further developed as part of HELCOM cooperation. Inland waters will be monitored in keeping with the regional monitoring programmes of water resources.

- Regularly updated marine management indicators will be published, while further developing the Baltic Sea states' joint indicators through HELCOM cooperation.
- Marine and water management efforts will be supported by applying current and developing new assessment tools.

Marine and water-related expertise promotes the region's economic and sustainable development

Water-related expertise in Finnish companies is at a good level, but their efforts to become international require further investments. Finnish water-sector companies need good domestic references to promote their exports. These can be obtained as part of implementation of water and marine resources management measures.

- Finnish water-sector companies will be supported in their efforts to develop their expertise and references for export purposes.

There is plenty of know-how and world-class research relating to the maritime industry in Finland and within the Baltic Sea Region as a whole. Demand and requirements for areas such as blue cleantech are increasing steadily and, with its solid expertise, Finland is in the vanguard of development. The Finnish maritime industry cluster has specialist know-how and a strong track record in this field, including new-generation vessels fuelled by liquid natural gas (LNG). Furthermore, Finland has significant expertise in development of maritime transport. Automation is increasing rapidly in shipping, and several companies are designing self-driving ships seamlessly connected to automated ports and land or air transport.

High-quality, reliable and up-to-date research information is a prerequisite for understanding the Baltic Sea's ecosystems and mechanisms. Research also offers a foundation for innovations and is therefore a necessary prerequisite for maritime blue growth and sustainable development. Finland has high-quality marine research, which is conducted by all of its key research institutes and universities. Research institutes work together to monitor the status of the Baltic Sea on a regular basis. Marine research also provides expertise for building research vessels and developing research equipment solutions with significant business potential. Finnish marine research is always international by nature, and it is important that Finnish researchers participate in international and global marine research organisations and play an active role in international consortia.

- Investments will be made in basic and applied research and maritime expert work.

The Finnish Marine Research Infrastructure consortium (FINMARI) develops the use of marine research equipment and is part of the field's international network. Finns are also developing remote sensing products for the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions.

- Support will be given to FINMARI's positive development as an internationally significant marine research infrastructure.
- Action will be taken to promote the creation of a marine research infrastructure in the Baltic Sea countries and more efficient sharing of resources such as equipment, vessels or specialist expertise.

The research and marine monitoring efforts conducted on the marine research vessel Aranda contribute to the essential knowledge base of Finnish marine expertise. As part of its overhaul, due to be completed in the spring of 2018, the vessel will be modernised to become the flagship of Finnish marine research, maritime industry know-how in special vessel technology, and Arctic expertise.

- Adequate resources will be secured for Aranda, while promoting its international use on the Baltic Sea, on oceans and in the Arctic region by increasing its visibility.
- Finnish expertise in marine research vessels will be highlighted so as to support both the international competitiveness of companies operating in the field and Finnish marine research.

It is important to put marine environmental information to diverse public use. The availability and usability of information will improve when the Finnish Marine Portal is completed in 2020 as a joint effort of Finnish institutes producing marine information.

- The availability and more efficient use of information and data will be improved by setting up and maintaining the Finnish Marine Portal, which will raise the profile of Finland's marine expertise and open data policy in keeping with the INSPIRE Directive.
- Action will be taken to promote the availability of information relating to the status of deep sea areas, the habitats and species of shallow sea areas, and pressures on the marine environment throughout the Baltic Sea Region and between Baltic coastal states.
- Action will be taken to promote marine information collection and research carried out by citizens (so-called citizen science) and use of information as part of marine conservation and sustainable use by ensuring the usability of the digital tools required for these purposes.

Strengthening the competitiveness of the maritime industry

The combined net turnover of the functions relating to the Finnish maritime sector is currently on a par with the forest industry. The Finnish maritime cluster is a diverse whole, comprising a wide variety of very different companies with expertise, resources and business activities in quite varied operating environments and market areas. The sector is constantly facing fierce global competition. The competitive edge of the parties involved in the Finnish maritime cluster has been based on their ability to change and produce innovations to meet market needs. Companies in the Finnish maritime cluster mostly operate in the following six main market segments: cargo transport, cruise line transport, automobile ferry and ro-ro vessel transport, offshore oil and gas production solutions, offshore renewable energy production, and public demand. The specific strengths of the Finnish maritime industry are related to designing and building cruise ships and vessels suitable for Arctic conditions.

The innovation activities carried out in maritime cluster companies form a strategic competitive factor. Innovation activities are diverse, and broad international networks are important for companies. The strategic priorities of the maritime cluster's research activities are cruise ship technology and offshore and Arctic technologies, while its main research themes include expertise, the environment and energy, digitalisation, and new business opportunities. Achievement of these priorities requires placing emphasis on the ability to forge links with the Baltic Sea Region and, more broadly, with international research, development and innovation (RDI) networks and markets.

Digitalisation is increasing in all the sectors and functions of the maritime cluster, creating new business opportunities from shipbuilding to vessel operation and cargo handling. One of these involves building an ecosystem for unmanned maritime transport, bringing together the sector's global pioneers and agile start-up companies to develop the world's first unmanned maritime transport solution.

Finland is the leading pioneer in development of autonomous maritime transport and autonomous vessels in the Baltic Sea Region. Finland has the world's first autonomous maritime transport testing area open to all players and intelligent maritime waterways using cutting-edge digital technology. Cooperation between Baltic Sea countries makes it possible to develop the Baltic Sea into the world's first international region of autonomous maritime transport. It boosts the competitiveness of companies operating in the Finnish maritime cluster and in the fields of digitalisation and automation, functioning as a model region to speed up adaptation of international maritime rules to autonomous maritime transport products.

Key future challenges envisaged for the maritime cluster include securing the availability of skilled labour and financing for the shipbuilding sector. In the midst of fierce global

Polaris, the first icebreaker in the world that can use liquid natural gas (LNG) as fuel as well as diesel. Photo: Timothy Bird

competition, it is important to maintain price competitiveness, profitability and – especially in maritime transport – the current conditions of competition.

- Efforts will be made to strengthen the competitiveness of the maritime industry, where the key is the continuous improvement and internationalisation of supplier network companies.
- Development of digitalisation will be supported in the maritime industry.
- Diverse innovation activities will be supported in order to help companies modernise their operations and strengthen their competitiveness.
- Action will be taken to ensure that Finland has an operating environment that makes it possible to test new ideas, technologies and operating models and to establish 'blue companies' producing these.
- Action will be taken to ensure that the international regulatory environment creates a globally consistent operating environment and opportunities for the Finnish maritime industry to compete in the global market.
- Cooperation between Baltic Sea countries will be promoted in order to make the Baltic Sea a pioneering region of autonomous maritime transport, while stepping up efforts to influence the international maritime regulatory activities (in IMO) to enable new autonomous maritime transport solutions.
- Maritime training will be increased and consolidated.

Towards a blue bioeconomy

Finland's National Development Plan for Blue Bioeconomy was adopted in November 2016 and its implementation has begun. The Nordic Road Map for Blue Bioeconomy was adopted in the December of the same year. As the foundation for the blue bioeconomy, sustainable use of renewable aquatic resources and related expertise-based business activities will also require new approaches and operating models. Effectiveness will be adopted as the premise and objective of economic contributions, which requires new funding solutions and cooperation between different parties.

- Business activities in the blue bioeconomy will be promoted by means such as innovative public procurement practices.
- Impact investments will be tested in order to increase effective cooperation between the private, public and third sectors.
- Innovation activities and implementation of bold new experiments will be supported through national regulation.
- Action will be taken to increase the use and value of domestic fish and utilisation of its by-product flows by developing high-value products, such as biofuel.
- Telecommunications links in Baltic coastal areas will be promoted with a view to improving the operating capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in sea and coastal areas.

New draw for tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

Tourism plays an important and growing role in creation of growth and jobs in the Baltic Sea Region. Finland's draw factors include its natural and man-made environments, safety and security, and clean environment. The maintenance and development of these factors also involves major economic opportunities in terms of both domestic and international tourism.

- Access to tourism services in coastal and island areas will be improved, while promoting development of smooth connections to tourist destinations. Creation of well-functioning travel chains will be enabled as a combination of digital, water taxi, demand-responsive and public transport services. This will also require well-functioning telecommunications links.
- Networking between enterprises will be promoted in order to develop broader service packages with different seasons in mind. Service

There is a lot of potential for tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. Photo: Visit Finland

packages will tap into the island and coastal culture, national parks, special characteristics of aquatic nature, etc., with due consideration for preservation of undersea cultural heritage and its sustainable use for tourism purposes.

- Finnish parties will be encouraged to participate actively in cross-border projects, such as developing themed cultural routes, in order to exchange best practices and expertise within the Baltic Sea Region and to effect joint products and marketing measures. It is also important to make use of information and recommendations produced as part of international studies.
- Tourism relating to the underwater marine environment and historical sites will be promoted.
- National resources will be channelled into development of pan-Baltic tourism cooperation.
- Example projects of waterways tourism and wellness services based on aquatic nature will be launched to promote service innovations, partnerships and new business models to increase tourism revenue, while developing solutions to ensure that tourism will not cause pressures degrading the marine environment.
- Training for tourism entrepreneurs will be promoted to enable them to become experts in sustainable tourism.

Putting use of the Baltic Sea on a sustainable footing through maritime spatial planning

Maritime spatial planning is a means to plan the use of sea areas in keeping with the principles of sustainable development. Maritime spatial plans are drawn up in cooperation between different parties in a process that reconciles the needs of the different uses of the sea. By examining the sea and its uses as a whole, it is possible to identify synergies, promote blue growth and commercial use of the sea, and to improve the status of the marine environment and nature.

- Maritime spatial plans will be drawn up for Finland by the end of March 2021, with a view to promoting sustainable development and growth in the various uses of marine natural resources, as well as achievement of good marine environmental status.
- Finland will engage in active cooperation with Baltic Sea and EU countries in order to coordinate maritime spatial plans and ensure information exchange.
- Finland will continue to take inventory of the biodiversity of the underwater marine environment in its sea areas, putting the information to use as part of ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning. Methods will be developed for this purpose, including assessment of the impacts of human activities on the marine environment.
- Cooperation between owners and users of Finnish seabed and bathymetric data will be improved, with due consideration for the restrictions set out in the Territorial Surveillance Act (755/2000)[2].

Territorial Surveillance Act (aluevalvontalaki 755/2000): http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2000/20000755

Pioneering the bioeconomy and the circular economy

The bioeconomy and the circular economy represent an opportunity to combine productivity, economic benefits and environmental improvement. Sustainable use of natural resources must be taken into account in all decision-making processes. Agriculture and forestry form an essential part of the bioeconomy and the circular economy.

Nutrient recycling improves resource wisdom and reduces loading on the Baltic Sea

Efficient nutrient recycling improves the status of water bodies and the Baltic Sea while reinforcing food security. Finland is committed to developing as a model country of nutrient recycling. The aim is to achieve a breakthrough in nutrient recycling by 2030, with low environmental emissions and efficient nutrient cycles. A further aim is to increase nutrient recovery, so that at least 50 % of manure and urban wastewater sludge will be covered by advanced processes by 2025. As a result, nutrients that have leached into water bodies will be returned to the nutrient cycle, while the amount of imported nutrients will have decreased and nutrient recycling will have created new business activities.

- Practical know-how and examples of good practices will be offered in order to implement nutrient recycling in Baltic Sea countries, while promoting networking between the countries. Contributions will be made to the nutrient recycling strategy being developed by HELCOM for Baltic Sea countries through Finnish expertise.
- Biomass processing technologies and production and product development of recycled fertilisers will be promoted through national efforts.

Photo: Miina Mäki, John Nurminen Foundation/Local Fishing Project

- The purity and safety of recycled nutrients used in agriculture and forestry will be ensured.
- Efforts will be made to influence other Baltic Sea countries to set at least equally ambitious objectives relating to nutrient recycling.
- Logistics and service solutions will be developed for nutrient recycling.
- Inclusion of new soil improvement methods (such as gypsum) into economic steering methods will be assessed in the light of research.
- The amount of organic matter in arable fields will be increased, resulting in enhanced water retention and nutrient absorption while also mitigating climate change by binding carbon into the soil.
- Corporate cooperation (symbiosis) in the use of energy sources, nutrients and raw materials will be promoted by producing and disseminating information about potential benefits.
- Development of high value-added products from biomasses will be promoted.
- Objectives and measures to reduce wastage across the entire food system will be determined in keeping with the Government Report on Food Policy[3].
- The ways in which economic steering methods may be used to promote the creation of a recycled nutrient market and, in particular, access to such a market will be explored on the basis of results from ongoing projects and experiments.

3 Government Report on Food Policy: http://mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1923148/lopullinen03032017ruoka2030_en.pdf

A large amount of phosphorus has accumulated in the Baltic Sea, and its release slows down the sea's recovery from eutrophication. It may be possible to accelerate improvement of the marine environment by manipulating the sea's internal nutrient reservoirs, should suitable methods be discovered.

- The scope and significance of the sea's internal nutrient reservoirs and potential restoration methods will be explored and tested in pilot projects.
- The nutrients and biomasses in the sea and water bodies as well as energy stored in these will be utilised in new value chains.

Managed material cycles reduce wastage of natural resources

Sustainable use of materials and products and reduction of wastage throughout their life cycles should be taken into account in all activities. This means optimising the length of material and product cycles, increasing product integrity and enabling reuse at different stages of the life cycle. Products should always be as durable, repairable and maintainable as possible. The digital economy boosts the sharing economy and cost-efficiency relating to various products, as long as maintenance measures and updates can be timed correctly.

One of the aims of better management of material cycles is to decrease emissions of litter and hazardous substances to the Baltic Sea and reduce the use of primary natural resources.

- In national terms, material development and product design processes should be required to cover life cycle considerations and sustainability assessment.
- Reuse of waste and effluents as raw materials and other forms of recovery will be promoted by actively seeking safe applications for these. Cooperation between industry, licensing authorities and experts will be developed in order to effectively put new solutions and effluent recovery methods to use without compromising the standard of environmental protection.

In order to boost the circular economy, it is important to increase the attractiveness of waste and materials generated as production effluents as raw materials, thus facilitating their recovery. At the same time, however, it is also important to ensure the purity of material cycles. It is important to assess risks and ensure that the circular economy and the related recovery of waste materials and by-products will not lead to health risks or pollution of the environment and pure soil.

- Measures set out in the National Waste Plan[4] will be implemented by 2023.
- Contributions will be made within the EU to promote the approval of new materials based on waste and by-products (such as fibre sludge) as eligible component material categories in the forthcoming EU legislation on fertilising products.
- Development of steering methods, innovative solutions and efficiency monitoring of the circular economy will continue so as to also take the status of sea and coastal waters more effectively into account.

Active reduction of marine litter in the Baltic Sea

Marine litter is a problem. Most of the litter is plastic and, according to some estimates, there will be more plastic than fish in the sea in 2050. In the Baltic Sea, the marine litter problem is especially related to microplastic litter.

Efforts to solve environmental problems relating to the use of plastics and, in particular, microplastics in the Baltic Sea are promoted through measures set out in the national marine strategy and implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM). Finland has appealed to Baltic Sea states in order for them to work together towards banning microplastics in cosmetic and hygiene products within the European Union. There is new information on the scope and nature of the problem all the time, and the subject is being studied with funding from sources such as the Academy of Finland.

- Action will be taken to increase knowledge of the health and environmental effects of microplastics.
- Action will be taken to step up a ban on the use of microplastics in cosmetic products.
- Action will be taken to ensure that no microplastics will be released into the soil and waters along with recycled nutrients.
- Studies will be carried out to determine the need for and solutions to reducing the release of microplastics into the sea from other sources, such as vehicle tyres and fleece fabrics.

As part of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission has started to prepare a strategy on plastics. The EU's strategy on plastics aims to address challenges

4 The National Waste Plan: http://www.ym.fi/en-US/The_environment/Waste/The_National_Waste_Plan

caused by dependence on fossil raw materials, low recycling and reuse rates of plastics, and release of plastics into the environment. Plastics and plastic waste cause significance adverse effects on marine ecosystems and the economy.

- The effectiveness of economic steering and the need for any possible new steering methods will be explored to step up recycling and reuse of plastics.

Both the price and quality of recycled plastics have been considered key factors preventing the recycling of plastics. That being the case, economic steering may also have a role to play in order to step up recycling efforts.

Likewise, organisation of plastic waste collection also plays an important role.

Bio-based materials may be used instead of fossil oil in plastic materials. Plastics are commonly used in packaging material. As part of preparing the EU strategy on plastics, the Commission should assess the potential of bio-based materials as substitutes for plastics. The Commission has launched a study to also define a sustainability assessment for bio-based plastics, in addition to biodegradable plastics.

- Sustainability assessment of bio-based materials will be supported in the EU.
- Introduction of environmentally sustainable bio-based packaging and logistics solutions will be promoted nationally, including as part of public procurement, and within the EU.

Reducing hazardous emissions into the sea

Hazardous substances may escape or wash into the Baltic Sea from many different sources, such as urban and industrial wastewaters, oil and chemical accidents, use of pesticides, consumer products, traffic, and atmospheric deposition. Many hazardous substances persist in the environment, accumulate in organisms and migrate over long distances. Information on the emissions, prevalence and effects of hazardous substances remains inadequate.

- The knowledge base relating to the concentrations, prevalence, behaviour, migration and effects of substances, in particular pharmaceuticals and other new groups of substances, will be improved, while developing monitoring efforts and contributing to the EU's forthcoming pharmaceutical strategy

Efficient reduction of hazardous emissions into the Baltic Sea calls for international cooperation and EU-level regulation. The obligations set out in the international Stockholm Convention concerning persistent organic pollutants have been incorporated into EU law.

Finland's National Programme on Dangerous Chemicals (KELO)[5] was updated in the spring of 2017. The programme takes the harm caused by chemicals to consumers, national health, occupational health and the environment into account throughout the chemical life cycle.

- Reduction of hazardous emissions to air and water and banning the use of hazardous substances will be promoted through international and EU cooperation.
- Substitution of hazardous chemicals will be supported at a national level.
- Awareness of the appropriate use of chemicals among companies and consumers will be promoted through communication measures.
- Studies will be carried out to determine the need to restrict the use of copper in antifouling paints[6] used on the bottom of boats.

Owing to environmental loads over the years, hazardous substances have accumulated in the bottom sediments of the Baltic Sea and in the soil of its catchment area.

- Concentrations and impacts of hazardous substances in contaminated sediments will be studied in connection with dredging operations, for example, and adverse effects arising from these substances will be eliminated.

At the same time that the circular economy is producing new solutions, it is necessary to ensure the management of hazardous substances. There is a lack of adequate tools to manage hazardous substances contained in products currently on the market when their service lives are extended or materials end up in new products.

- Action will be taken to facilitate the traceability and risk management of chemicals in the circular economy and, in particular, recycling processes.

5 Finland's National Programme on Dangerous Chemicals (KELO): http://www.ym.fi/en-US/The_environment/Environmental_hazards_of_chemicals/National_Programme_on_Dangerous_Chemicals

6 Paints intended to discourage attachment of organisms.

Finland supports the analysis of the interface between the EU's chemicals, products and waste legislation, which is being carried out during 2017 as part of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan. In addition to increasing identification and traceability of hazardous substances, this interface analysis also considers it important to clarify legislation and methodologies relating to transition from waste to products.

- Efforts will be made to improve the clarity of legislation in terms of when material ceases to be waste, to develop a national methodology to this effect, and to facilitate application of the EU's waste classification to waste recycling.

Increasing the use of renewable energy

Increasing the use of renewable energy throughout the Baltic Sea Region reduces greenhouse gas emissions, replaces the use of fossil fuels, and mitigates the environmental load on the Baltic Sea. Several Baltic Sea countries have abundant biomass reserves, making it possible to increase the use of biomass for efficient and sustainable energy production. In addition, there is significant growth potential in the use of other renewable energy sources, such as solar, geothermal, offshore wind and wave energy. Due to its central location, the Åland Islands Region is an example of a suitable area for testing such solutions.

Reduction of carbon emissions from transport plays an essential role in achieving a low-carbon society. Important means include increasing the number of electric vehicles and the use of biogas as well as biofuels produced from waste, residues and forest biomass derived in conjunction with forest management and logging operations. Furthermore, agricultural, urban and industrial waste and by-product flows can also be used both in production of biofuels for transport and in heat and power production. The use of biogas in transport has increased in recent years.

Promotion of alternative fuels and propulsion systems requires a large market area and an extensive delivery network. Demand will create opportunities for new high-tech bio-refinery and biogas investments as well as an intelligent network for charging electric vehicles.

- The market for advanced biofuels and biogas for transport uses will be promoted in all modes of transport within the Baltic Sea Region.
- An intelligent network for charging electric vehicles will be promoted in the Baltic Sea Region.

Nauvo Archipelago. Photo: Visit Finland

Connecting Finland to the Baltic Sea Region

Logistics and transport connections as enablers of growth

Effective transport and logistics represent a key competitiveness factor for Finland. Compared with its key competitor countries, Finnish trade and industry have higher logistics costs and longer transport distances to most of the country's main market areas. Households spend a considerable proportion of their disposable income on transport, which affects the jobs/housing match, especially in growth areas. Development of new transport technologies and servitisation should be fully tapped in order to achieve transport emission targets. Finland should take advantage of its location at the node of intercontinental air routes. The kind of cost-efficient and reliable connections that promote prosperity require appropriate infrastructure and capacity management, ensuring the interoperability of the key structures and solutions that enable digitalisation, as well as numerous competent commercial parties and public authorities. Specific challenges for the competitiveness of export industries include costs of shipping arising from regulation and the needs of winter navigation.

- Action will be taken to ensure Helsinki-Vantaa airport's conditions for growth.
- The Baltic Sea Region will be developed as a development platform for digitalisation, which Finland as a pioneer will use to scale up global solutions for emerging markets. In this vision, intelligent ships and land logistics will take advantage of digital information and new innovations in robotics, automation and energy technology. This will also involve promoting electronic management methods and the use of related information in port operations and logistics chains.
- Action will be taken to ensure that the definition of the energy efficiency index will not prevent building of vessels suitable for winter navigation.
- Cooperation with neighbouring countries will be increased in ice-breaking, airspace management and implementation of rail traffic control systems.
- Development of shipping automation will be promoted through cooperation within the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and other inter-agency maritime organisations.
- Efforts will be made to extend the TEN-T core network corridor[7] northwards from Helsinki.
- More TEN-T funding will be channelled into intelligent transport solutions and ensuring the interoperability of digital solutions required for travel chains.
- Cross-border interoperability and scalability of service and technological solutions will be taken into account in digital transport services.
- Action will be taken to ensure the attractiveness of Finnish ports as nodes of cargo transport and logistics and as ports of call for international cruise ships.

The Baltic Sea Region is also a natural development platform for completely new, faster modes of transport. The Baltic Sea Region's common commuting area could help shape the region into a significant new centre of world trade.

- The Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel project will be promoted.
- The feasibility of the Arctic Ocean railway will be assessed and studied in order to connect northern areas to Central Europe via Rail Baltica.

7 A TEN-T core network refers to a transport network covering the strategically most important nodes and links of the trans-European transport network. The core network is a subset of the more comprehensive network overlaying it. The core network is multimodal, that is to say, it includes all transport modes and their connections as well as relevant traffic management systems.

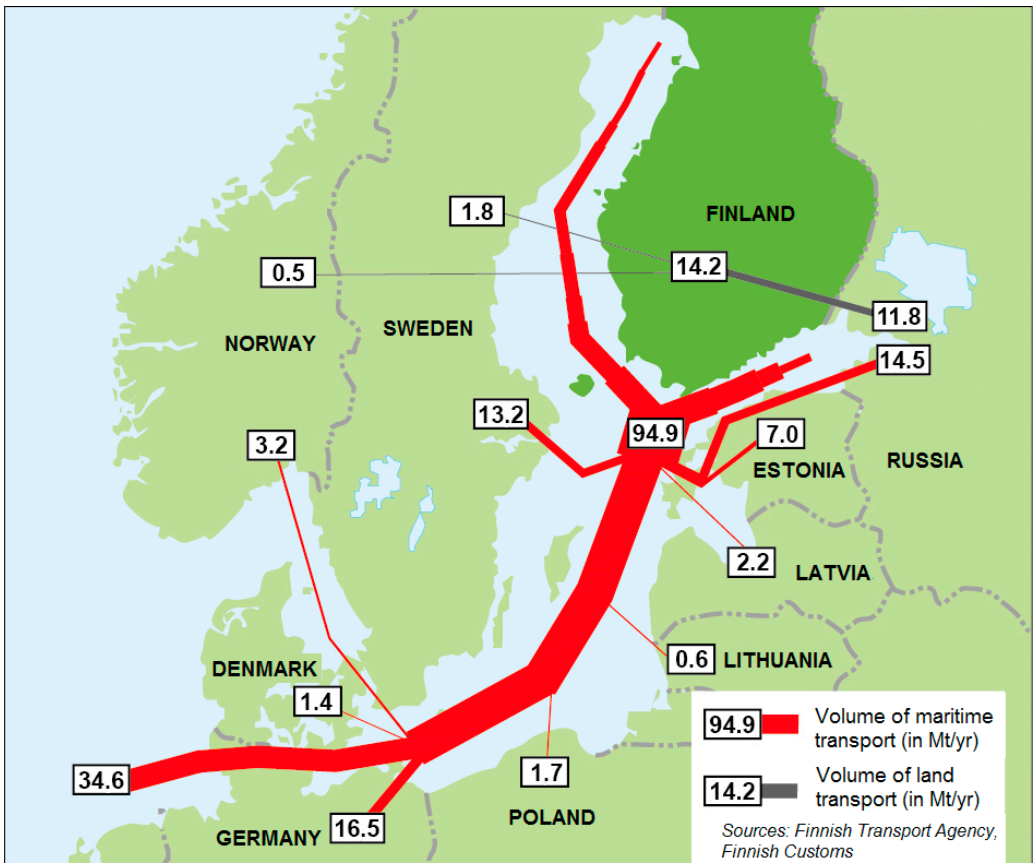


Figure 2. **Finland's import, export and transit volumes and countries of origin and destination in 2016 in millions of tonnes (Mt). The transit volume amounted to 6.6 million tonnes (Source: Collaboration Team for Freight in Foreign Trade). Vessel capacity on the Baltic Sea has been estimated to increase from about 800 million tonnes in 2010 to over 1,200 million tonnes by 2013. Regarding marine traffic there are approximately 2000 vessels every day moving in the Baltic Sea. (HELCOM 2017)**

Telecommunications

Finland has fast, reliable and low-cost communications networks with comprehensive geographical coverage. Development of the capacity, speed and reliability of Finland's communications networks should also continue at a world-leading level moving forward, in order to enable the country to form a key link in global telecommunications networks. In addition to the existing C-Lion cable passing to Germany, Finland would benefit from implementation of the Northeast Passage cable.

A cable connection along the Northeast Passage would make it possible to achieve the most reliable and fast physical telecommunications route from Asia to Northern and Central Europe via Norway, Russia and Finland. It would significantly increase the reliability of

telecommunications between Europe and Asia, which is essential for banks and stock exchange trading, as well as for the progress of the Internet of Things, new-generation (5G) mobile communications network connections and robotisation, etc. From Finland's perspective, the project would promote the country's competitiveness, growth and employment while also increasing the capacity available for communications networks. Telecommunications will become an inextricable part of the mobility of people and goods. High expectations are placed on the forthcoming fifth-generation wireless data networks, which support the safety, efficiency and environmental friendliness of transport.

- Determined action will be taken towards realisation of the Northeast Passage cable, while promoting the related cable running from Northern to Southern Finland.
- Development of communications networks, such as 5G technology, will be supported in Finland by means such as enabling trials.

Smart energy grids

Finland's long-term objective is to become a carbon-neutral society. All sectors must take advantage of the potential of energy efficiency and the cleantech business. Finland is part of the Nordic wholesale electricity market, which also covers the Baltic countries. Finland's solid transmission connections to neighbouring countries enable a liquid and competitive wholesale electricity market. To date, natural gas is only imported from Russia. The aim is to create a regional gas market for Finland and the Baltic countries.

- Efficient use will be made of the different power production structures in the Nordic countries by strengthening cross-border transmission connections.
- The security of gas supply will be increased by building a natural gas connection from Finland to the Baltics.

Cooperation is critical to security of supply

Society must keep functioning even during any possible serious disturbances and emergencies. Contingency plans and agreements are being drawn up to prepare for various types of disturbances, in particular between the Baltic Sea Region's EU Member States. The most prominent threats are related to disturbances in information and communications systems and networks, energy distribution and maritime transport. Keeping mari-

time transport operational in all circumstances is essential for the Finnish economy and the functioning of society as a whole. Security of supply during any possible disturbances and emergencies requires continuity of maritime transport. The more serious the crisis or disturbance is, the more critical the demand for the maritime transport fleet will be. Finnish shipping know-how and networks play an essential role in ultimately ensuring the security of supply through maritime transport operations during disturbances and emergencies, enabling mobilisation of the right kind of vessels and competent crew even for challenging circumstances.

- Operational capacity will also be ensured in situations where information and communications systems are unavailable.
- Energy supply and effective food supply will be ensured under all circumstances.
- Cooperation in the area of preparedness will be carried out with neighbouring countries.

A safe and secure Baltic Sea Region

A safe and secure operating environment is a prerequisite for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. This also involves prevention of environmental accidents caused by growing maritime transport as well as development and maintenance of accident response capabilities. Safety and security influence all parties and functions. Finland will proactively and consistently promote safety and security within the Baltic Sea Region through its own actions, in regional cooperation and as part of the EU's development efforts. International cooperation and agreements are a prerequisite for maintaining safety and security in the Baltic Sea Region.

In the area of foreign and security policy, Finland's key objective is to increase stability and internal security in the Baltic Sea Region. Finland's objectives and means to strengthen security in the Baltic Sea Region have been outlined in the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy[8]. In the current situation, maritime and aviation safety issues may also be related to a broader security policy context.

Finland will play an active role in development of the EU's maritime policy and coast guard functions, while also taking the opportunities for Arctic cooperation into account in the development work. Finland will aim to make appropriate use of the opportunities provided by EU funding and cooperation to maintain and develop safety and security in Finland and the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions. Solutions developed to address challenges in the Baltic Sea Region may also be applied in the Arctic region and vice versa, in particular in the fields of maritime safety and prevention of environmental accidents.

In order to counter cross-border threats to internal security, Finland will develop cooperation between crime prevention, border security and emergency authorities within the Baltic Sea Region.

8 Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy: https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/75139.

The offshore patrol vessel Turva. Photo: The Finnish Border Guard

Comprehensive security concept

The comprehensive concept of security is a preparedness cooperation model approved at a national level to secure the vital functions of society. The concept taps into the competencies of key parties, ranging from the authorities to citizens, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and business life. In keeping with the concept, where necessary, Finland will mobilise the resources of the entire society to secure and maintain its vital functions in both normal and exceptional circumstances. The safety and security of the Baltic Sea Region play a significant role in terms of society's vital functions and the smooth running of people's everyday lives. The comprehensive security concept creates good conditions to respond to broad security threats within the Baltic Sea Region.

- Cooperation in keeping with the comprehensive security concept will be consolidated in Baltic Sea countries by actively presenting the concept in appropriate contexts and highlighting its best practices.

Active maritime and aviation safety

Finland is a pioneer in maritime safety. Finland is actively involved in development and maintenance of maritime safety within the Baltic Sea Region in cooperation with all relevant parties within the region. Continuous improvement of the maritime traffic control system is important in order to minimise risks involved in vessel traffic and prevent accidents. Preparedness for any possible accidents is based on sufficient implementation capability, efficient management and active inter-agency cooperation. In particular, national and international cooperation in and preparedness for disasters should be developed.

Moving forward, Finland will continue to secure its independent operating capacity for key maritime missions. Fleets will be kept operational in all Baltic Sea conditions, available for year-round use. The needs of different authorities and maritime parties and the multi-purpose functionality and other appropriate considerations relating to vessels will be taken broadly into account in public procurement of fleet overhauls and replacements.

The Baltic Sea Region functions as a development platform for innovative maritime monitoring and navigation technologies. Moving forward, it is essential to pay attention to shipping automation, unmanned systems and underwater infrastructure. This should be taken into account at both national and international levels when developing infrastructure, inter-agency cooperation, as well as training and legislation. It is also necessary to take the needs of businesses and citizens and the opportunities these provide into account in development efforts.

Common situational awareness plays a key part in maritime safety. Moving forward, Finland will continue to actively contribute to projects aiming to improve exchange of information and common situational awareness within and beyond the Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to take advantage of functional and technological sensor and control system solutions in this development work in cooperation with partners and as part of the EU's development efforts.

- Surveillance of sea areas will be developed by tapping into international cooperation.
- Preparedness for and management skills in multi-sectoral maritime incidents and disasters as well as management systems to support these will be developed both nationally and in cooperation with Baltic Sea countries.
- Inter-agency cooperation will be consolidated in purchasing and maintenance of maritime fleets with a view to enhancing the multi-purpose functionality of vessels and tapping into different parties' specialist expertise.

- Active contributions will be made to developing and testing the functionalities of the EU's coast guard cooperation as well as fleet, technological and situational awareness system cooperation.
- Functionalities and technologies developed at EU level will be utilised in both national and Baltic Sea coast guard functions.
- Action will be taken to promote implementation of recommendations concerning aviation safety and new recommendations to increase the use of transponders and collect operational procedures in keeping with good aviation practice. Such recommendations are also more widely available for use in international aviation cooperation.

Developing civil safety through digital services

Finland's sea and coastal areas are known to be among the safest in the Baltic Sea Region. A safe maritime environment and reliable authorities play a key role in terms of civil safety.

The services of maritime authorities will be developed with due consideration for the needs of citizens, businesses and anyone moving about in sea areas. Development efforts will ensure that anyone moving about in sea areas will have easy access to information collected and produced by the authorities. The aim is to increasingly engage parties moving at sea in production of information and observations, especially geared towards promoting safety and security.

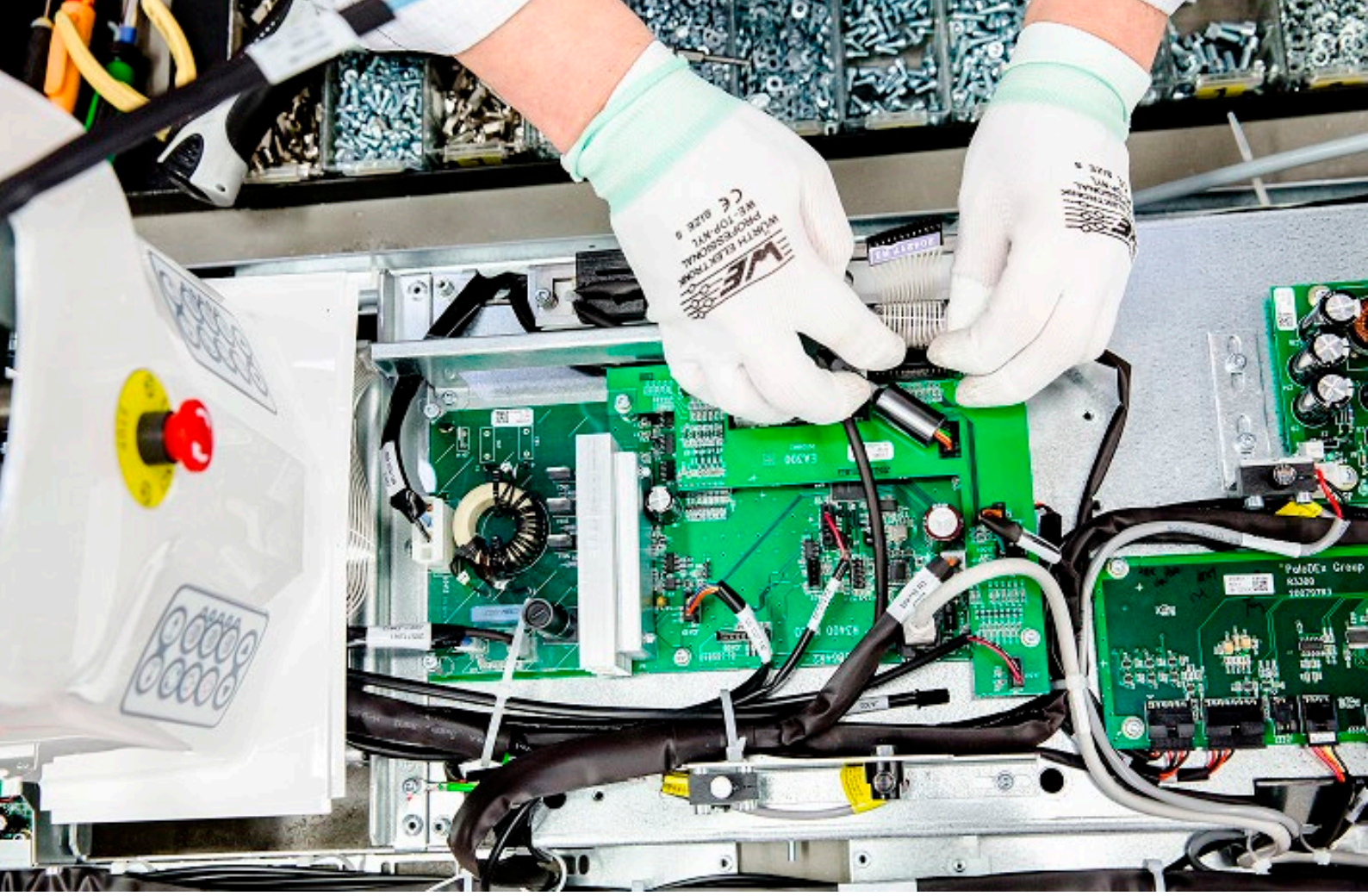
- Digital services will be developed for sea areas to allow the use of information collected by the authorities to develop services to meet the needs of citizens and businesses; correspondingly, information collected by citizens may be used to discharge official duties.

Efficient inter-agency cooperation

The Baltic Sea Region is seen as being a model for cooperation between security authorities. National and cross-border cooperation structures enable broad-based and efficient exchange of information and practical measures. Cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region should be developed further, in particular in terms of maritime and other security and emergency authorities. The aim is to also make use of the results of the development work in Arctic cooperation.

Cooperation between maritime authorities will be developed at a national level. Cooperation makes it possible to avoid overlaps, achieve cost savings, and create new innovations and good operating practices. When developing cooperation, special attention will be paid to the needs of the authorities in maintenance of maritime and border security, law enforcement, cross-border crime prevention, and development of surveillance and management infrastructure.

- Active contributions will be made to inter-agency cooperation in the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions and to development and utilisation of technological and functional solutions.
- Active contributions will be made to developing and testing the functionalities of the EU's coast guard cooperation as well as fleet, technological and situational awareness system cooperation by introducing national best practices as part of such cooperation.
- Efforts will be made to develop the joint use of Finland's public authority network (VIRVE) with neighbouring countries.
- New technologies, such as unmanned vessels and satellite-based monitoring solutions, will be tested and utilised as part of developing cross-sectoral surveillance applications.
- Cooperation and technological solutions in the Baltic Sea Region will also be used in development of operations in the Arctic region and vice versa.



Building new health technology. Photo: Finland Image Bank

Innovations and competitiveness

Innovations as drivers of growth

Finland aims to improve the Baltic Sea Region's competitiveness. Know-how and cross-border innovation activities play a key role in this respect. From Finland's perspective, the most important targets of most added value in innovation cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region include promoting the internationalisation and exports of SMEs, as well as promoting digitalisation and its integration as part of services and industry.

Liberation of the world economy, reduction of transport costs and, in particular, development of communications technology have changed companies' business models. In terms of structural renewal of the economy, the logic of the service economy and increasing customer value are key prerequisites for successful business operations. In the global division of work, this will further increase competition for competencies and capabilities.

For a small, developed and open economy like Finland, growth is based on forging links to international trade and competition. The Baltic Sea Region provides small and medium-si-

zed enterprises with a channel for exports and expanding international activities, through which they can further connect as part of global business and networks. Through cooperation with Baltic Sea countries and regions, it is possible to jointly build service and product packages, tapping into high-level know-how available in different countries.

From Finland's perspective, it is important for the Baltic Sea to become an effective global cooperation area. Interaction and cooperation between cities and regions plays a key role in this respect. Cooperation opens up new horizons, while the region's attractiveness for investments, companies, competencies, workers, etc. will grow, thus contributing to improving competitiveness and productivity. In order to enhance its competitiveness, Finland needs to be able to develop an attractive and well-functioning regional structure and urban network central to the Baltic Sea, so as to create conditions for knowledge-based development, in particular. Finland's strengths are related to good infrastructure, safe and high-quality living environments and high-level expertise.

- National urban development efforts should pay attention to the significance and development needs of the most central cities in particular, while supporting development of their land use, internal and external traffic and expertise environments.

The development zones promoting growth and development, including their cities, are key areas for business and innovation activities. The Northern Growth Zone, ranging from Stockholm to St. Petersburg via Turku and Helsinki, brings together more than 13 million people and an economic area worth over 330 billion euros. The zone links together Scandinavian and Russian markets along the TEN-T core network corridor defined by the EU. The Northern Growth Zone plays a key role in terms of Finland's foreign trade, logistics and international investments – the zone accounts for over 60 % of Finland's exports in euro terms.

- Development zones, such as the Finnish Growth Corridor[9], the Northern Growth Corridor and the Bothnian arc, should be promoted from the Baltic Sea perspective.

In recent years, plenty of business accelerators have been established in the Baltic Sea Region. Intensifying cooperation between these would improve the global visibility of the Baltic Sea Region as a cluster of entrepreneurship, thus creating better conditions for attracting investments and expertise.

9 A growth corridor stretching from Helsinki to Seinäjoki via Hämeenlinna and Tampere

Integrating digitalisation as part of the existing, strong manufacturing industry and its auxiliary services is an important competitive asset for Finland and its neighbouring states. As such, the Baltic Sea already offers a creative development environment for new, low-carbon transport solutions and innovations (such as automated ships), which can mitigate or prevent adverse environmental effects. These solutions may also serve the Arctic region.

- Action will be taken to promote the Baltic Sea Region's innovation activities and, in particular, strategic programme cooperation between businesses and universities and other higher education institutions. Such cooperation should pursue internationalisation and promotion of cooperation across technological and sectoral borders and between start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies.

A digital single market for the Baltic Sea Region

Promoting digitalisation plays a significant role in the transformation taking place in society. It challenges us to question the ways in which we operate and recreate them as more effective and flexible versions. For companies, digitalisation offers tools to modernise business operations. In addition to technologies, digitalisation of business operations takes advantage of changes in customer behaviour due to digital services and the new ways in which markets operate. Digitalisation is a cross-cutting theme permeating all the priorities set out in this strategy.

Finland is one of the leading countries in the world in terms of eGovernment services. Research also shows that Finland's digital competence is the highest among EU countries. The Government's aim is to promote creation of digital services and new business models, as well as the use of new technologies and new business concepts. Likewise, research, development and innovation funding is increasingly channelled into digital services. Digitalisation also supports achievement of climate and energy objectives.

The EU's Digital Single Market (DSM) initiative focuses on various measures to promote the single market, such as roaming, cloud computing, and promoting digitalisation of business and industry and their integration into the platform economy. The DSM initiative includes the *eGovernment Action Plan for 2016–2020*. Measures supporting this plan include promoting openness of public sector information, stepping up the use of spatial information, reforming information management legislation, promoting electronic identification (eIDAS), and project support for digital services under the Connecting Europe Facility

programme. Implementation of such projects in the Baltic Sea Region will strengthen the region's economic competitiveness and standing.

Finland is already engaged in active information management cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region, in particular with Estonia[10] and the Nordic countries. These cooperation projects aim to make the most of, bring together and further develop national ideas as well as solutions and standards developed in the European Union. With an open-minded and innovative approach to applying the currently evolving technologies and operating models, Finland may, together with other Baltic Sea countries, become a pioneer in shaping the Baltic Sea Region into a model region for digitalisation within the entire European Union. This may have a very significant impact on the development of regional digital single markets and its wide-ranging benefits.

- Efforts will be made to expand information management cooperation between Finland and Estonia and the Nordic countries and to open up cross-border digital services for the entire Baltic Sea Region. The objective is supported by the decision of Ministers for Nordic Cooperation to establish an ad-hoc council of ministers for digitalisation (MR-DIGITAL) to manage and coordinate contributions to cooperation in the field of digitalisation together with the Baltic countries.

Expertise as the cornerstone of societies

Maintaining and renewing expertise are a prerequisite for the competitiveness of Finland and the Baltic Sea Region. Finland's higher education institutions are being developed into an internationally competitive system, which also flexibly meets regional needs. The policies to promote internationalisation in Finnish higher education and research 2017–2025[11] were published in March 2017. They highlight Finland's global visibility as a strong pioneer in higher education and research.

It is necessary to engage in international cooperation with neighbouring regions and at a global level to ensure the competitiveness, high quality and diversity of the country's hig-

10 Development of the X-Road backplane technology for public information systems: http://valtioneuvosto.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/10623/suomi-ja-viro-perustavat-yhteisen-instituutin-kehittamaan-x-road-teknologiaa?_languageId=en_US.

11 International strategy for higher education and research: http://minedu.fi/en/international-strategy-for-higher-education-and-research

her education and research system as a whole. The Baltic Sea Region's higher education institutions and research institutes can work together to make more efficient use of research infrastructure, which will especially benefit Finland and the region's other small countries.

Finnish higher education institutions and research institutes are involved in several higher education and research networks in the Baltic Sea Region, the most significant being the Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS) of EU and Baltic Sea states. The programme offers financial resources for research and innovation cooperation between Baltic Sea states by arranging joint calls for proposals. Half of the funding is covered by the participating states, while the other half comes from the European Commission. The programme is coordinated by the BONUS Secretariat located in Finland. A new BONUS programme is currently being prepared with a view to expanding the programme to also cover the North Sea area, which will considerably increase its funding.

- Regional higher education and research cooperation will be promoted, while consolidating high-quality expertise to benefit all countries within the Baltic Sea Region.
- The possibilities to strengthen cooperation with Russia in higher education, research and innovation cooperation concerning the Baltic Sea Region will be explored.
- Support will be given to continuing the BONUS programme and its expansion to cover both the Baltic Sea Region and the North Sea area.
- Adequate resources of higher education institutions and other educational institutions will be ensured, as far as possible, in order to increase multidisciplinary Baltic Sea expertise.
- Attention will be paid to the education and training needs of growth fields and those facing structural change.

International impact and cooperation

Together, the Baltic Sea Region's countries can exert a strong influence at EU and global levels, leading the way towards sustainable development and combating climate change through their own actions. As producers and appliers of new, clean technology and new ways of operating, they can offer solutions to global problems, thus strengthening the region's safety, security, stability, wellbeing and international competitiveness. The Baltic Sea and the Arctic regions have much in common, and solutions developed to address their challenges may benefit both regions.

- Finland will work actively to ensure that the Baltic Sea countries can jointly influence the implementation of appropriate policies for the region through bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
- In order to boost Finland's lobbying efforts, implementation of the objectives of different ministries and other parties in Baltic Sea cooperation will be promoted more effectively by developing procedures and internal flows of information.
- Integrated maritime policy funding from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) will be used to promote protection of the marine environment, maritime safety, maritime spatial planning, marine expertise, and development of the maritime cluster and a blue bioeconomy at a national level.
- Funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions (IBA), managed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, will be used to support Finland's national objectives in multilateral cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and in implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to increase Finland's visibility and impact while promoting the channelling of EU and other international funding into projects that are important for the country.

The European Union

Eight of the EU Member States are Baltic Sea coastal states. EU legislation and policies have a significant bearing on the entire Baltic Sea Region and EU resources can be used to solve the region's problems. Within the European Union, Finland seeks to achieve equitable treatment of different regions and support for implementation of legislative solutions that

are appropriate in terms of the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe as a whole. Regionalisation makes it possible for Baltic Sea countries to find common views on the EU's key legislative initiatives concerning the Baltic Sea, adjusted to the needs and conditions of the Baltic Sea.

- Support will be given to **regional and cross-border cooperation**, which strengthens the Union and brings it closer to citizens through its practical nature.
- Efforts will be made to influence the reform of the **EU's common agricultural policy** so as to offer opportunities for the bioeconomy and the circular economy, reduction of nutrient emissions and production of ecosystem services.
- **Sustainable fisheries** will be promoted in the Baltic Sea through regionalisation together

The EU's integrated maritime policy will create opportunities for marine and maritime economic activities, as well as development of maritime safety and marine protection.

- A goal-oriented national maritime policy will be developed. The weight of the Baltic Sea Region will be enhanced while driving the interests of Finland and the Baltic Sea Region in the EU's integrated maritime policy in cooperation with other Baltic Sea states.

Maritime safety and inter-agency cooperation have developed rapidly in Europe as part of solving challenges in the Mediterranean region. Cooperation between the EU's maritime agencies and the Member States' coast guard operators has intensified, while common performance capacities and functionalities are being developed and cost-efficient use of resources is being enhanced.

- The opportunities offered by EU cooperation will be utilised for further development of maritime safety and inter-agency cooperation in both the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions.

EU legislation and funding

EU legislation and the funds channelled through its provisions play a significant role in terms of national measures, such as promotion of research, development and innovation (RDI) activities and business opportunities, as well as environmental measures promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

Debates concerning EU funding and the EU's next multiannual financial framework are already ongoing in the European Union. In terms of Finland's national policy guidelines

concerning EU funding, it is essential that funding will continue to serve the EU's objectives and national needs as appropriately as possible throughout the funding period. In this respect, new challenges are likely to come from the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and the additional resources required for expanding policy measures, such as immigration policy. Finland's national objectives and action concerning the EU's future financial frameworks have been and will be outlined in specific government and parliamentary decisions.

The current funding period for support programmes is characterised by the relatively heavy administrative burden and detailed regulation of implementation and monitoring, due to the EU's regulatory framework. Without compromising sound financial management, EU regulations should be developed so as to enable more appropriate, flexible and cost-efficient implementation and monitoring of measures under the support programmes and promotion of new innovations emerging during a programming period.

Implementing the obligations relating to EU policies creates opportunities and contributes to sustainable blue growth both in internal waters and in the Baltic Sea. The measures also have significant interfaces with the circular economy and nutrient recycling.

The 2017 Government EU strategy[12] states that Finland will influence the reform of the EU's cohesion policy during 2017–2019 with a view to ensuring that the special status of the sparsely populated areas in Eastern and Northern Finland and Finland's other special characteristics, such as the Baltic Sea, Arctic nature and the Russian border region, will be taken into account as part of the reform.

- Finland will demand that its remote and northern location, sparse population and long distances are taken into account in cohesion policy. This requires continuing support for sparsely populated northern areas, attention to consolidation of the EU's Arctic policy, and strengthening cooperation at external and internal borders.
- Research, development and innovation (RDI) and business opportunities in the bioeconomy and the circular economy will be promoted as a horizontal theme in all relevant EU policies and their funding.
- Efforts will be made to ensure that future EU marine and fisheries funding is more suitable for promoting a blue bioeconomy, in particular through research, development and innovation (RDI) activities.
- Efforts will be made to ensure that the EU's maritime policy funding to meet national needs continue at least at its current level.

12 Government EU strategy 2017 (in Finnish): https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Liiteasiakirja/Documents/EDK-2016-AK-96994.pdf

The most important funding instrument for bilateral cooperation with Russia comprises the EU's Cross-Border Cooperation programmes adopted under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI CBC) for 2014–2020. Among these, the most relevant to Baltic Sea cooperation is the Southeast Finland/Russia programme, with objectives including development of business operations, education and research, environmental protection, and border controls and promotion of border management.

- Finland considers it important to consolidate cooperation at the EU's external borders.

European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

In 2009, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) launched a new approach in the Union's cohesion policy and regional implementation of EU policies. It was followed by the Strategies for the Danube Region, the Adriatic and Ionian Region, and the Alpine Region. Countries forming a natural geographical macro-region work together with the European Commission to draw up a cooperation strategy and objectives for their region in order to respond to specific macro-regional challenges. The objectives are implemented in practical cooperation projects, by creating networks and through cooperation processes, making the best possible use of the existing funding programmes and institutions while implementing EU legislation.

Implementation of the EUSBSR has taken on established forms. The strategy has been used to strengthen existing – while also creating new – cross-sectoral expert networks to implement the Action Plan for the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy. In addition to governmental bodies, the expert networks bring together Baltic Sea countries' local and regional governments, universities, other research and educational institutions, as well as civil society.

- Multi-level governance participation in the EUSBSR will be further encouraged, while especially inviting business life to get involved in developing future solutions and technologies together with Baltic Sea partners.
- Cooperation with non-EU neighbouring countries, such as Norway, Iceland, Russia and Belarus, will be continued and consolidated in implementation of the objectives of the EUSBSR.
- Cooperation will be encouraged with parties involved in implementing the EU policy towards the Arctic Region.

The goals of the EUSBSR – to save the sea, to connect the region and to increase prosperity – are also correct for the future. While progress has been made in many areas, there are still plenty of problems to tackle.

Prime ministers Juha Sipilä and Stefan Löfvén together with European Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu in the annual strategy forum for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Stockholm November 2016. Photo: EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

- Finland wants to improve the effectiveness of the EUSBSR by focusing on the fields that support sustainable development and competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region and require macro-regional cooperation, as described in this Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- The synergies between Structural Funds programmes and macro-regional strategies should be further developed, while creating flexible mechanisms for international cooperation at a project level.

The Northern Dimension

The Northern Dimension (ND) refers to a common policy of the European Union, Russia, Norway and Iceland, which aims to create stability, wellbeing and conditions for economic development in Europe's northern areas. In geographical terms, the Northern Dimension covers the Baltic Sea and Europe's Arctic regions, as well as Northwest Russia. Practical cooperation is being carried out through the ND Environmental Partnership, the ND Partnership in Public Health and Wellbeing, the ND Transport and Logistics Partnership, and the ND Cultural Partnership. The Northern Dimension is a significant tool for achieving the objectives of Baltic Sea cooperation with non-EU Baltic Sea countries, such as Russia, while promoting connections between authorities, experts and civil society.

- Finland aims to ensure political support from the European Union and partner countries for Northern Dimension cooperation.
- Opportunities will be explored for making use of Northern Dimension Partnerships and related funding arrangements to slow down climate change, in particular by reducing black carbon emissions.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

The Council of the Baltic Sea States is an intergovernmental institution comprising all the Baltic Sea countries, which has promoted dialogue and practical cooperation between Baltic Sea countries since 1992. Its priorities include a regional identity and a sustainable, prosperous, safe and secure Baltic Sea Region.

The CBSS has comprehensive expert groups operating in several fields, while it brings together several networks for inter-agency cooperation as well as forums for scientific cooperation, social partner organisations, NGOs, and youth dialogue, etc. The CBSS has also promoted exchange of experiences in managing migration.

Furthermore, the CBSS is actively involved in implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The CBSS sustainable development agenda includes The Baltic 2030 Action Plan, which provides guidelines for cooperation to promote sustainable development objectives.

- Finland considers it important to ensure continuity of dialogue at a political level within the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Meetings of foreign and prime ministers should be organised regularly to provide orientation for the Council's practical work.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM)

HELCOM is responsible for implementing the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention). The Contracting Parties include all the Baltic Sea states and the European Union. For Finland, HELCOM is the most significant forum for transnational cooperation in the protection, management and sustainable use of the marine environment. Its activities bring together the Baltic Sea EU Member States, the European Union and Russia around the same table. HELCOM provides political guidelines for protection of the Baltic Sea. The key objectives of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action

A patrol from The Gulf of Finland Coast Guard District in action. Photo: The Finnish Border Guard

Plan (2007, 2013) include containment of eutrophication, reduction of hazardous substances, improvement of biodiversity, and environmental protection relating to maritime activities. The Action Plan makes the Baltic Sea the only sea area in the world to have an internationally agreed ceiling for nutrient emissions and emission reduction targets allocated to states. As about 60 % of the measures included in the Action Plan had been achieved in 2017, HELCOM decided to launch a reform of the plan.

- Finland aims to contribute to the reform of the HELCOM Action Plan to ensure achievement by 2020 of a revised and up-to-date plan corresponding to the current plan in terms of ambition.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers plays a significant role in Baltic Sea cooperation, as it participates in implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and supports active citizenship and cooperation projects in the Baltic countries and Northwest Russia.

- Finland considers it important that the capabilities, programmes and resources of the Council of Nordic Ministers can be used in support of the objectives and goals of Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Role of authorities in Baltic Sea cooperation

Inter-agency cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region covers development of preparedness in emergency operations, maritime safety, maritime search and rescue, and combating environmental accidents, in border management and fighting cross-border crime, as well as in maintenance of marine monitoring and situational awareness. Cooperation networks enable efficient burden sharing between countries. Inter-agency cooperation in the Baltic Sea has shown the way for many European and broader international initiatives and development projects.

- Moving forward, Finland will continue to offer active support for various arrangements of cooperation between officials with a view to effectively solving practical problems. Finland will consolidate the visibility and recognition of inter-agency cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, while creating opportunities to support these financially.
- Finland will actively support making use of cooperation solutions created in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic regions in both regions.

Role of local and regional governments and civil society in Baltic Sea cooperation

Local and regional governments play an active role in practical implementation of the Baltic Sea policy, with their strong networks within the Baltic Sea Region and pioneering role in many fields. They are responsible for maritime spatial planning, urban wastewater treatment, preparedness for climate change, urban planning, education, training and culture, traffic and transport, ports, and promotion of businesses and innovation platforms, etc. Regional parties play a significant role in various Baltic Sea cooperation projects.

Connections between citizens reinforce an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. NGOs make invaluable contributions to Baltic Sea cooperation and, in particular protection of the Baltic Sea. They also create innovative solutions, while being able to take fast action and promote business opportunities in cooperation with public bodies.

- The objectives of Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will be implemented in cooperation with regional parties and civil society.

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