Baltic Sea Environmental Co-operation
- a Swedish Perspective on Agricultural Discharge Issues within HELCOM and Baltic 21

Stina Karlsson

Co-operation between states is a necessity to be able to handle environmental issues in the Baltic Sea area, since these are transboundary problems. Two organisations that deal with environmental issues in this region are HELCOM and Baltic 21. The aim has been to study how the problem of pollution from diffuse land-based sources, especially agriculture, has been dealt with through these organisations, to look upon the roles of and the relationship between HELCOM and Baltic 21 and to study the possibilities and the difficulties in the practical co-operation. The study holds a Swedish perspective, as Swedish representatives with connections to the HELCOM and Baltic 21 processes have been interviewed. The analysis shows that the EU is becoming increasingly important as an actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation, which makes the future roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21 uncertain. Concerning the difficulties of the work, aspects mentioned were cultural differences, group problems and lack of resources. To improve the work some proposals made by the interviewees were to use the experiences from different projects and to increase the resources.
Abstract

Co-operation between states is a necessity to be able to handle environmental issues in the Baltic Sea area, since these are transboundary problems. Two organisations that deal with environmental issues in this region are HELCOM and Baltic 21. The aim has been to study how the problem of pollution from diffuse land-based sources, especially agriculture, has been dealt with through these organisations, to look upon the roles of and the relationship between HELCOM and Baltic 21 and to study the possibilities and the difficulties in the practical co-operation. The study holds a Swedish perspective, as Swedish representatives with connections to the HELCOM and Baltic 21 processes have been interviewed. The analysis shows that the EU is becoming increasingly important as an actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation, which makes the future roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21 uncertain. Concerning the difficulties of the work, aspects mentioned were cultural differences, group problems and lack of resources. To improve the work some proposals made by the interviewees were to use the experiences from different projects and to increase the resources.
Preface

The Baltic Sea has long interested me and choosing it as a study area for this thesis was not difficult. However, to decide what interested me the most about environmental co-operation in this region, took time and so did the process of performing the study. I would like to thank all of the persons who agreed to be interviewed for this study, as well as those who have recommended people to talk to. Thanks go out to my family and friends, especially Jenny Andersson and Therese Andersson, and last but not least to my tutor Sofie Storbjörk who has helped and supported me all through the process.

Stina Karlsson,
August 2003
Acronyms and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAAP</td>
<td>Baltic Agricultural Run-Off Action Programme</td>
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<td>BAT</td>
<td>Best Available Techniques</td>
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<td>BEF</td>
<td>Baltic Environmental Forum</td>
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<td>BEP</td>
<td>Best Environmental Practices</td>
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<td>BSRP</td>
<td>Baltic Sea Regional Project</td>
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<td>CBSS</td>
<td>Council of the Baltic Sea States</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCB</td>
<td>Coalition Clean Baltic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOSAIB</td>
<td>Development of Sustainable Agriculture and Industry in the Baltic Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency; Naturvårdsverket</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELCOM</td>
<td>Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission; the Helsinki Commission</td>
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<td>HELCOM LAND</td>
<td>Land-based pollution group within HELCOM</td>
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<td>IBSFC</td>
<td>International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission</td>
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<td>ICES</td>
<td>International Council for the Exploration of the Sea</td>
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<td>IMO</td>
<td>International Maritime Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTI</td>
<td>Swedish Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering at SLU</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSPAR</td>
<td>Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Northeast Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PITF</td>
<td>Programme Implementation Task Force within HELCOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLU</td>
<td>Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOG</td>
<td>Senior Officials Group within Baltic 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGA</td>
<td>Working Group on Agriculture within HELCOM</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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1. Introduction

The character of environmental problems demands international action. Due to the fact that pollution knows no boundaries (White et al., 2001) and can be spread across country borders, the activities of one state may affect another. To take national measures is thus not sufficient to come to terms with transboundary environmental issues. Co-operation between states is a necessary complement. This is stressed by for example Ebbesson (2000), Hjorth (1992) and White et al. (2001).

Co-operation is defined as the process of working together to the same end (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995). In the case of international environmental co-operation, countries work towards certain goals to achieve a better environment with united efforts. The work can have a political action programme or a legally binding international convention as a starting point and be co-ordinated by an international secretariat or organisation. Hjorth (1992) has identified three different strategies for environmental protection in the present regime for international co-operation. These are the legal, the scientific-technological and the political-programme strategy, which all complement each other. They will be developed later on in this thesis (see section 3.1).

Thus, common goals and policies are set up between the states to create a better environment, but how are they realised? How does international co-operation work on the practical level? To find out, the Baltic Sea has been chosen as a study area for this thesis. The Baltic Sea is a shared resource among the several countries around it and co-operation plays an important part in the handling of environmental problems in the region. The specific conditions of the Baltic Sea make it especially sensitive to polluting activities (see section 3.2). Pollution is brought to the sea through diffuse and point sources on land as well as in the water. Most of the pollution originates from land (HELCOM, 2003b) and particularly difficult to control are diffuse sources (HELCOM, 2003a), such as agriculture.

To improve the environment of the Baltic Sea region, common initiatives have been taken through different types of co-operation; legally, scientifically as well as politically. Regional co-operation began in 1974 with the signing of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, also known as the Helsinki Convention. The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission or the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) in short, was established to answer for the administration of the implementation of the convention (Hjorth, 1992). HELCOM was the first co-ordinator in environmental issues and has been seen as the central actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation. An example of a newer form of co-operation, is Baltic 21. An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea, Baltic 21, was adopted by the states in the region in 1998. The goal of the action programme is to attain sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region (Baltic 21, 2003a). How these two Baltic Sea organisations work in practice to realise their strategies and goals will be the focus of this study.
1.1 The aim of the study

The starting point for this study is the importance of international co-operation on transboundary environmental issues. Within the co-operation there are different approaches to a problem, such as legal, scientific-technological and political-programme strategies, which complement one another.

The aim of this thesis is to study how the problem of pollution from diffuse land-based sources, especially agriculture, is dealt with regionally in the Baltic Sea area through the work of the organisations Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) and Baltic 21. More specifically, the roles of and the relationship between HELCOM and Baltic 21 will be studied. Furthermore, the possibilities and the difficulties in the practical co-operation as it appears from interviews will be dealt with. The study holds a Swedish perspective and concentrates on the views and experiences by Swedish representatives.

The following research questions specify the aim of the study further and have been in focus in the research process;

• How are diffuse land-based pollution sources in general and agriculture in particular handled organisationally within HELCOM and Baltic 21 respectively?
• How does the work through HELCOM and Baltic 21 on diffuse land-based pollution relate to and complement one another?
• What are the consequences for the environment of the Baltic Sea and for the national environmental work in Sweden, of the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution through HELCOM and Baltic 21?
• What are the possibilities and the problems respectively with the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution within HELCOM and Baltic 21?
• How could the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution within HELCOM and Baltic 21 be improved?

1.2 The outline of the study

A methodological discussion will follow next, which includes how the study has been delimited and a section on qualitative interviews, the methods for collecting the empirical material. In chapter 3, Hjorth’s concept of different strategies in international environmental co-operation will be introduced. A background is also given to the Baltic Sea region and its work to improve the environment through HELCOM and Baltic 21. The interview material will be analysed in chapter 4 and the results from it discussed and conclusions drawn in chapter 5. Appendix 1 presents the interview questions.
2. Methods
The methods used for the study will be treated in this chapter. Choices and delimitations are discussed in section 2.1 and qualitative interviews, the method used for collecting the empirical material, in section 2.2.

2.1 Choices and delimitations
In this section, the choices made when delimiting the study will be treated. The environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area consists of several forms of co-operation. To choose what co-operation to study, Hjorth (1992) influenced the decision. Hjorth (1992) has identified three different strategies for international co-operation; the legal, the scientific-technological and the political-programme strategy (see section 3.1). This categorisation inspired the study, in the sense that the focus is upon two different strategies. The choice fell upon HELCOM, whose work takes its starting point in the legally binding Helsinki Convention. The presumption was that this work could be seen as a legal strategy. HELCOM is also one of the oldest forms of co-operation in the Baltic Sea area. It has since its start in 1974 been the central actor in environmental issues in the region (Hjorth, 1992). The other organisation in focus is Baltic 21, which represents a newer form of co-operation established in 1998. It is a political action programme, which should correspond to the political-programme strategy. Baltic 21 also has a wider approach as it deals with sustainable development, a concept where environmental issues is just one of three aspects. HELCOM and Baltic 21 thus could be said to represent two different forms of Baltic Sea co-operation.

The international arena can be divided into two spheres, one of which is made up of sovereign states and the other including non-governmental units such as environmental NGOs and industry (LUCCI, 2002). Both HELCOM and Baltic 21 imply co-operation on a state level, between governments, and are in that sense similar. This could facilitate the comparison of them, but it also means that the “outside” perspective of a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) has been left out. The initial idea was to add an NGO called Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) as a study object, which is a network of environmental NGOs around the Baltic Sea (Bergström, 1992). However, to focus on two and not more organisations make possible a deeper analysis.

When HELCOM and Baltic 21 had been chosen as study objects, the aim and the specific research questions were formulated. After having gained some information on the organisations of HELCOM and Baltic 21, the interest was to look closer on how the environmental co-operation worked in practice and how HELCOM and Baltic 21 were related.

Furthermore, a specific environmental problem has been concentrated upon to delimit the study; the discharge from agriculture and in particular nutrients. Agriculture is categorised as a diffuse land-based pollution source, which is one of the most difficult ones to tackle for the Baltic Sea region. These difficulties could have affected the results of the study, but it is still an important area for co-operation. The study has further been delimited so as to concentrate on how the co-operation in
the Baltic Sea area works today and on what has happened within the organisations the last few years.

During the study, it has become evident that there is a distinction between on the one hand the policy level of the work in international co-operation where goals are formulated, and on the other hand the practical level where the goals are realised. The practical level is in focus in this study. For instance, the possibilities and the difficulties of the practical co-operation are studied through the interviews.

2.2 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were chosen as a method to collect the empirical material for this study. The qualitative approach aims at an understanding of the situation of an individual or an organisation by getting close to them (Holme and Solvang, 1997). It is about trying to look at the world from the perspective of the interviewee (Holme and Solvang, 1997). Lantz (1993) means that the qualitative method seeks to capture what is subjective and Kvale (1997) states that the qualitative interview is a method that makes it possible to capture experiences and meanings from the daily life of the people interviewed. Thus, this research method makes it possible to get an insight into the practice of environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea region, through the people who work with these issues. The purpose has been to learn about their experiences of and opinions on the work by the organisations of HELCOM and Baltic 21. Consequently, the study gives a view of what the chosen interviewees think and generalisations from the study should only be made carefully.

What people to interview was not obvious from the start and the process of finding adequate people was not always easy, partly because it is a question of understanding the organisations and partly because the organisations of HELCOM and Baltic 21 differ from one another. To find relevant people to interview, the staff at the secretariats of HELCOM and Baltic 21 was asked for help. The interviewees have partly been chosen on the staff’s recommendation, partly on recommendation from other interviewees. The aim has been to interview people who have an insight in issues of diffuse land-based pollution and especially agricultural pollution, within HELCOM and Baltic 21. Persons with corresponding roles and tasks between the two organisations were sought, but difficult to find. Recommendations were given to interview a couple more specific persons, mainly concerned with the policy levels like the creation of Baltic 21, but also people at the Swedish national ministries. However, at that stage the interview material was already so large that with more interviews it would be difficult to do the material justice within this study. On the other hand, if interviewees had been added, the results could have been broadened.

The organisations consist of representatives from different countries. Interviews have been carried out with people who represent Sweden in different working groups within HELCOM and Baltic 21, as well as with people who have been connected to the work done by these two organisations. The study thus takes on a Swedish perspective for practical reasons, like a geographical closeness to the interviewees. This means that a complete picture of the work, including the perspectives of all involved countries, cannot be found through this study. Three of the interviewees work at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) with issues related to HELCOM. Another one works at the Swedish Board of Agriculture
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-a Swedish Perspective on Agricultural Discharge Issues within HELCOM and Baltic 21

(Jordbruksverket) and has recently become acquainted with the work through HELCOM and Baltic 21, but has earlier experiences from international co-operation. Finally, three persons work at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) with issues related to Baltic 21. The interviewed people could be said to represent the practical level, i.e. most of them take part in different working groups or projects with the aim to realise the strategies of HELCOM and Baltic 21. The interviewees are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Persons interviewed for the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Form of interview</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiverton, Philip</td>
<td>Work at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, SLU). Chiverton and Lund are co-ordinators of the BAAP and Lund is also involved in the BSRP. Jakobsson is an international research director at the Swedish Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering (JTI) at SLU. She was the secretary-general of Baltic 21 between February 1999 and October 2001.</td>
<td>Group interview at SLU, Uppsala, Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jakobsson, Christine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lund, Staffan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmerman, Anders</td>
<td>Works at the Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket). New as a Swedish representative in agricultural matters within Baltic 21 and HELCOM. Earlier experiences from international co-operation.</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallenius, Ulla-Britta</td>
<td>Works at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, EPA (Naturvårdsverket). Co-ordinates the work within HELCOM.</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linderholm, Kersti</td>
<td>Works at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, EPA (Naturvårdsverket). Swedish representative in the Working Group on Agriculture within HELCOM.</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stackerud, Margareta</td>
<td>Works at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, EPA (Naturvårdsverket). Swedish representative in the HELCOM LAND group.</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview questions were prepared after some studying of HELCOM and Baltic 21 and with the aim and research questions in mind. The interview questions were compiled in an interview manual, which has not been used strictly. The aim has been to have open questions and to pose the main questions marked in bold (see appendix 1). The rest of the interview questions were used to follow-up the answers when necessary.
The people interviewed had been contacted either by e-mail or telephone before the actual interview took place. Before the interview, the interviewees were informed about the aim of the study and asked if the interview could be taped and if they allowed their names to be used in the thesis. The main questions had also been sent out in advance to give the interviewees the opportunity to prepare themselves if possible. The intention was for the interviews to last for about an hour each. Two of the interviews lasted for about half an hour. The fact that the interviews lasted for different amounts of time has been taken under consideration in the analysis, to give the longer interviews more space. The interviews were carried out either through the telephone or on the spot, depending on what best suited the interviewees. The group interview differs from the telephone interviews in the sense that the persons influence each other’s answers, which could be a strength as well as a weakness. Holme and Solvang (1997) mean that the group interview includes a social dimension. The telephone interviews could also be said to contain more anonymity than the group interview where everyone could see each other. However, the interviewer misses out on the body expressions in telephone interviews. It should also be mentioned that Chiverton was attending the group interview mainly as a listener and an observer.

Directly after an interview had been performed, the first impressions were written down together with a rough analysis using the aim and the specific questions. Since the interviews had all been taped, the interviews were then transcribed in order to write down the contents of the interviews. The language was carefully revised from spoken into written Swedish. This means that hesitations, repetitions, “filling-in-words”, agreeing “yes” and the like were left out when not relevant for the content. Subjects not concerned with the topic were also overseen. The intention has also been to create whole sentences. The transcriptions were sent to the interviewees for their approval together with some complementary questions. Comments from the interviewees have been considered and changes made in the interview material.

The analysis of the interview material continued with the process of finding the answers to the research questions. Information material from HELCOM and Baltic 21, as well as the Helsinki Convention and the Baltic 21 Action Programme have been related to in the analysis. The theory that Hjorth (1992) introduces has also, apart from being a starting point when choosing the organisations for the study, been used as a tool to analyse the interview material. In particular it has been helpful when relating the HELCOM and Baltic 21 strategies to one another. The quotations used in the thesis have been translated from Swedish into English, which means that the formulations may not be exact.
3. Environmental co-operation

The theoretical starting point for this study, on international environmental co-operation, will be developed in section 3.1. A background to the special conditions of the Baltic Sea is given in section 3.2. It is followed by a section on the regional environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area and especially introduces the two organisations in focus in this study; HELCOM and Baltic 21 (section 3.3). Their goals are presented and their organisation described.

3.1 International environmental co-operation

Concerning the handling of environmental problems internationally, there is no international government with the authority to regulate these issues (White et al., 2001). Such supranationality would threaten the national state and its sovereignty (Hjorth, 1992). However, there are other forms of international governance that can fulfil similar functions (White et al., 2001). One way of describing international governance is in the respect of regimes. Regimes are defined as principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures that serve to co-ordinate international action (White et al., 2001). Regimes can be thought of as providing opportunities for states to agree on policies that are favourable for more than one state. International regimes could help to bring about environmental policies, which has to be solved through international co-operation (Hjorth, 1992). In regime analysis empirical data from a specific issue-area is studied to determine if the behaviour could be described as following a particular regime (Hassler, 2000).

However, the purpose of this study is not to analyse or try to outline the regime of the Baltic Sea area, but rather to analyse how the international co-operation in the area is organised by different actors and what difficulties and possibilities can be found relating to that work. In the present international regime, and concerning different forms of co-operation, Hjorth (1992) characterises three strategies for environmental protection. These are the legal strategy, the scientific-technological strategy and the political-programme strategy, all associated with different actors. The legal strategy formulates the legal principles that codify the rights, obligations and duties of states concerning environmental issues. These legal principles are found in legally binding documents, such as international conventions and are advocated by lawyers. According to the scientific-technological strategy, scientific evidence and possible technical solutions should be the basis in the formulation of policy recommendations. International organisations that produce scientific reports and recommendations for environmental policies as well as scientists play an important role. The political-programme strategy finally, is based on a goal-means approach to political problem solving and is advocated by political representatives. Policy-goals, action-programmes, small expert groups, declarations and conferences are parts of this strategy.

The three strategies in the present international regime for environmental co-operation could be viewed as independent strategies, but none of them can be successfully applied separately. The strategies complement each other and have to be combined (Hjorth, 1992). This indicates that there are a number of different
strategies and actors on the arena, which deal with international environmental problems.

Thus, solutions to transboundary environmental problems have to be sought through international co-operation (White et al., 2001), co-operation between countries. The United Nations’ (UN) World Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, was according to Bergström (1992), the starting point for international co-operation on environmental matters. Several conventions aiming at environmental protection has been adopted since and bodies for international environmental co-operation has been created (Bergström, 1992). What organisations have been established in the Baltic Sea region will be presented in section 3.3.

3.2 The special conditions of the Baltic Sea

The Baltic Sea is a relevant study object from a Swedish point of view, as it is geographically close to Sweden. The Baltic Sea region is especially interesting because of its political context with the former East-West border (Hjorth, 1992). The 1989 liberalisation in Eastern Europe led to closer contacts between all the countries around the Baltic Sea and increased commitment to environmental co-operation (HELCOM, 2003b). The 11 countries of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which are involved in the Baltic 21 process, differ widely as far as economic, social and environmental preconditions are concerned, but they agree on the long-term goals they wish to attain for the region as a whole (Baltic 21, 2003a). The situation in the Baltic Sea area is currently going through changes again, now that the EU enlargement is under way and many of the countries are to become members.

The Baltic Sea is the world’s largest brackish sea (HELCOM, 2003a). It is almost totally enclosed by land and only connected with the North Sea through the narrow, shallow straits around Denmark and Sweden. This limits the inflow of water from the open sea, which is the main source of oxygen for the deep waters and significant for the nutrient cycles of the Baltic Sea. The slow exchange of water and low salinity levels, make the Baltic marine ecosystems particularly vulnerable (HELCOM, 2003a).

Within the catchment area of the Baltic Sea 14 countries are situated, with a population of nearly 85 million people (HELCOM, 2003a). All these countries are likely to affect the environmental status of the sea through polluting activities of different kinds. In the Helsinki Convention, pollution is defined as introduction by man, directly or indirectly, of substances or energy into the sea, which are liable to create hazards to human health, to harm living resources and marine ecosystems, to cause hindrance to legitimate uses of the sea including fishing, to impair the quality for use of sea water, and to lead to a reduction of amenities (HELCOM, 1992).

Polluting substances, such as nutrients and contaminants enter the Baltic Sea in a number of ways; through rivers, run-off from coastal areas, exchange of water with the North Sea, atmospheric deposition and due to human activities at sea (HELCOM, 2003a). Although oil pollution is more visible than land-based pollution, a considerably greater part of the sea pollution originates from land (Ebbesson, 2000). Ebbesson (2000) refers to figures from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which states that about 44 % of the sea pollution in general are land-based,
about 33 % reach the sea through the atmosphere, mostly originating from land, and only 12 % of the pollution comes from the shipping. This is also acknowledged by HELCOM (2003b) that state that most of the pollution in the Baltic Sea originates from sources on land.

Land-based pollution can be further categorised as either originating from a point or a diffuse source, where the point source constitutes a defined spot while the diffuse source is more difficult to identify. Pollution from land-based sources is in the Helsinki Convention defined as pollution of the sea by point or diffuse inputs from all sources on land reaching the sea waterborne, airborne or directly from the coast (HELCOM, 1992). Pollution from land-based sources includes many different types of emission, such as point-source emissions from industry or from wastewater treatment plants, as well as non-point pollution from agriculture (Hjorth, 1992). Diffuse pollution sources such as agriculture and transport are believed to be the dominating ones in the region, particularly in relation to eutrophication (Hägerhäll, 2001). The impact of diffuse pollution sources is becoming more crucial and difficult to control (HELCOM, 2003a).

Agricultural sources such as manure and fertilisers burden the Baltic Sea with nutrients, which results in eutrophication (HELCOM, 2003a). According to HELCOM (2003a), the most serious threats for the Baltic Sea are eutrophication, due to nutrient inputs of phosphorus and nitrogen, and hazardous substances like PCB, DDT and heavy metals. The symptomatic problems of eutrophication, such as serious oxygen deficiency, extensive algal blooms and floating mats of decaying seaweed in coastal waters, remain common in spite of substantial efforts to reduce nutrient inputs (HELCOM, 2003c).

3.3 Regional environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area

In the remaining sections of this chapter, a background to the environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea region will be given. The two regional organisations focused upon in this study, HELCOM and Baltic 21, are treated in section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 respectively. Apart from these two organisations, several other forms of co-operation have been established concerning environmental issues in the Baltic Sea area. Many are connected to the processes within HELCOM and Baltic 21. There is also international co-operation that covers a larger area than the Baltic Sea region, but that still matters for the region. To name a few organisations there is the work achieved through the European Union (EU), the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Northeast Atlantic (OSPAR), the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC), the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) and the Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF).

3.3.1 The Helsinki Commission – HELCOM

The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) has been the central forum for international environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area since its establishment, according to Hjorth (1992). Its full name is the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM, 1992) and its main goal is to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to restore its ecological balance, through intergovernmental co-operation (HELCOM, 2003a). The
present contracting parties to HELCOM are Denmark, Estonia, the European Community, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden (HELCOM, 1992). It is stated that the Contracting Parties individually or jointly shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative or other measures to prevent and eliminate pollution (HELCOM, 2003a).

HELCOM serves as the governing body for the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, the Helsinki Convention, which was signed in 1974 and entered into force in 1980. In 1992, a new version of the Helsinki Convention was then signed, which entered into force in 2000. The Convention covers the whole of the Baltic Sea area, which except for the sea itself, also includes inland waters (HELCOM, 2003a). The Helsinki Convention covers almost all kinds of pollution and pollution sources; land-based activities, shipping, dumping and activities on the seabed (Ebbesson, 2000). In the 1992 convention, land-based sources of pollution are given greater attention and diffuse pollution sources are also observed, which was not the case in the 1974 convention (Ebbesson, 2000). A reason for this could be that these issues have been increasingly noticed internationally.

The working structure of HELCOM, supported by the secretariat, consists of the meetings of the Helsinki Commission, the Heads of Delegation, six subsidiary bodies (such as HELCOM LAND) and the Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF) (under which the Working Group on Agriculture operates) (HELCOM, 2003a). These different groups work to realise the goals of the Helsinki Convention. The HELCOM secretariat is situated in Helsinki, Finland (HELCOM, 1992).

The Helsinki Commission meets at least once a year, according to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM, 1992). The duties of the commission are amongst other things to observe the implementation of the convention and to make recommendations on measures relating to the purpose of the convention (HELCOM, 1992). So far, about 200 recommendations have been adopted (HELCOM, 2003a). HELCOM is also responsible for monitoring and implementing the 1988 Ministerial Declaration, which includes the target of 50% reductions in nutrient inputs into the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, they are responsible for implementing the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP) with the most polluting sources within the Baltic Sea catchment area, the so-called “hot spots” (HELCOM, 2003a). At regular intervals, the contracting parties shall report to the commission on the legal, regulatory or other measures taken for the implementation of the convention, the annexes and the recommendations (HELCOM, 1992).

The Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF) co-ordinates the implementation of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP) (HELCOM, 2003a). The HELCOM LAND group and the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) will be discussed in the analysis chapter (section 4.1).

HELCOM meetings are also attended by so-called observers. Examples of observers are the intergovernmental organisations Baltic 21 and IBSFC and the international NGOs CCB and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (HELCOM, 2003b).
3.3.2 An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea region – Baltic 21

Baltic 21 is a term used for the initiative and the process to develop and implement an Agenda 21 in the Baltic Sea region, as well as the Baltic 21 document itself. The 11 countries of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) adopted the Baltic 21 document in 1998 (Baltic 21, 2003a). These countries are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation (the North-Western part) and Sweden (Baltic 21, 1998). Apart from these CBSS countries, the Baltic 21 network consists of the European Union, intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions and NGOs and networks (Baltic 21, 2003a).

The Baltic 21 process aims at a sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region, encompassing economical, social and environmental aspects. The emphasis is on regional co-operation and the work focuses on the following sectors; agriculture, energy, fisheries, forests, industry, tourism, transport, education and spatial planning. The objective of the Baltic Sea regional co-operation is the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of the people, within the framework of sustainable development, sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment (Baltic 21, 2003a).

The steering group for the Baltic 21 process is called the Senior Officials Group (SOG) and it consists of representatives from the governments of the countries of the CBSS, the EU, the lead parties, regional intergovernmental organisations (such as HELCOM), non-governmental organisations (such as CCB) and international financing institutions (Baltic 21, 2003a). The main responsibility for the sector work is distributed among the SOG members. The work within the Baltic 21 sectors is led by the lead parties whose role is to initiate, co-ordinate and report on the implementation of the sector actions. Each sector has one or two so-called lead parties. For the agricultural sector, Poland and Germany are the lead parties. To support the Baltic 21 process, a secretariat has been established in Stockholm, Sweden (Baltic 21, 2003a). The work within the agricultural sector is treated in the analysis chapter (section 4.1).
4. Analysis

The analysis of the interview material is presented in this chapter. The sections of the chapter correspond to the research questions; see chapter 1. Section 4.1 treats the handling of the issue of diffuse land-based pollution within HELCOM and Baltic 21. It focuses upon the working fields of the interviewees, without aiming at a complete picture of the work in diffuse land-based pollution. After that, there is a section on the relationship between HELCOM and Baltic 21 and the role of the European Union (EU) in the Baltic Sea co-operation. In section 4.3 some of the consequences of the co-operation, according to the interviewed persons, are dealt with and section 4.4 discusses possibilities and problems in the practical work within HELCOM and Baltic 21. It builds on the experiences of the interview persons. Finally, section 4.5 treats the issue of how the Baltic Sea co-operation could be improved.

4.1 The issue of diffuse land-based pollution

How are diffuse land-based pollution sources in general and agriculture in particular handled organisationally within HELCOM and Baltic 21 respectively?

The above research question will be focus in this section. How HELCOM and Baltic 21 respectively treat diffuse land-based pollution sources, especially agriculture, will thus be dealt with together with the question of what priority these issues have within the organisations, according to the interviewees. At the end of the section, different projects supporting the HELCOM and Baltic 21 processes are described.

4.1.1 Handling the issue within HELCOM

The work within HELCOM takes the Helsinki Convention as its starting point. Principles and obligations concerning pollution from land-based sources are regulated in article 6 of the Helsinki Convention. The implication of the regulations is further developed in Annex III, which declares that pollution from diffuse sources such as agriculture should be eliminated by promoting and implementing Best Environmental Practice (BEP). According to Annex II, BEP signifies that a combination of measures are to be applied, for example provision to the public and to the users of information on the environmental consequences of a product or activity, development of Codes of Good Environmental Practice, saving of resources and application of economic instruments. Prevention of pollution from agriculture is treated more specifically in part two of Annex III to the Helsinki Convention, where a number of measures are presented. There are specific principles on plant nutrients that the contracting parties have to integrate into their national legislation or guidelines, but also principles on plant protection products, environmental permits, environmental monitoring and information (HELCOM, 1992).

The organisational structure within the HELCOM field of agriculture is currently going through changes. A Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) was set up to work under the Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF) (HELCOM, 2003b). The group’s main task was to find ways to reduce nutrient inputs from agricultural sources into the Baltic Sea (HELCOM, 2003a). The main tasks were described by one of the interviewees the following way; to find out how the implementation of
Annex III progressed in the different countries, to monitor and to define agriculture (Linderholm, 2003). The WGA was composed of experts from all coastal states and consisted of representatives from both the environmental and the agricultural sectors (HELCOM, 2003a). The group had a mandate to work for three years and finished its work in the spring of 2003. When interviewed in April 2003, Linderholm still functioned as the Swedish representative of the working group. Linderholm works at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Naturvårdsverket, which together with the Swedish Board of Agriculture, Jordbruksverket, handle agricultural issues within HELCOM. A representative from the Swedish Board of Agriculture sometimes joined the meetings of the WGA as well. At the end, Emmerman, who has also been interviewed for this study, held this post.

In the spring of 2003 the WGA had already passed the time period of three years, which was why Sweden wanted to close down the group (Linderholm, 2003). However, the representative from the Swedish EPA stresses that the work in agricultural matters will still continue, but in a different way or in other groups (Linderholm, 2003). According to Lund (2003) at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), who was interviewed later than Linderholm, the working group for agriculture within HELCOM has now been dissolved. Emmerman (2003) from the Swedish Board of Agriculture, who took part in the group at its end, also confirms this and continues to say that it is still uncertain how the work will proceed. The Swedish representative within HELCOM LAND means that agricultural issues such as diffuse nitrogen leakage are important issues for HELCOM, but that it is uncertain if there will continue to be an agricultural group within HELCOM (Stackerud, 2003). Fallenius (2003), co-ordinator of the HELCOM and the OSPAR (The Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Northeast Atlantic) work at the Swedish EPA, finds it difficult to talk about the work in agricultural matters, because of the current restructuring. Many of the interviewees (Fallenius, 2003; Emmerman, 2003; Stackerud, 2003) refer to the meeting of the environment ministers in June 2003 and believe that it will clarify how the work will proceed:

"Currently, there is a phase when the future work is discussed. The working group within HELCOM has finished its work and there will be a ministerial meeting later this year. Within Baltic 21 there are also discussions on the future work” (Emmerman, 2003).

Thus, there seems to be a phase of uncertainty at the moment, as to what will happen to the work concerning discharge from agriculture in the near future. The need for changes of organisation raises questions on why the agricultural group cannot continue.

Apart from the Working Group on Agriculture, there is another group within HELCOM with relevance to agricultural pollution issues; HELCOM LAND. The Land-based Pollution Group, HELCOM LAND, is responsible for reducing pollution from all sources on land within the catchment area. The group promotes environmentally sound practices and technologies such as Best Environmental Practices (BEP) and Best Available Techniques (BAT). Prioritised sectors are industry, transport, agriculture and wastewater treatment. HELCOM LAND also reviews the HELCOM Recommendations regularly. They work closely with various international governmental and non-governmental organisations (HELCOM, 2003b).
Stackerud is the Swedish representative within HELCOM LAND. She has mainly been involved in issues related to chemicals, and through her perspective the view of diffuse land-based pollution is widened in this study, not only to regard agricultural matters.

To conclude, organisationally there have been the WGA and the HELCOM LAND to deal with diffuse land-based pollution sources within HELCOM. The interviewed persons were also asked what priority they believed diffuse land-based pollution, or more specifically agricultural issues, have within HELCOM and Baltic 21. When HELCOM is considered, Stackerud (2003) of the HELCOM LAND group believes that diffuse sources such as nitrogen and chemicals are prioritised, but that they are still difficult to tackle and that they are politically sensitive issues. Fallenius (2003) also says that agriculture has been seen as an important sector and refers to the fact that for instance the Working Group on Agriculture was set up. According to HELCOM (2003a), their priorities are eutrophication (especially the contribution of agriculture), hazardous substances, the land transport sector etc, which are or could be diffuse land-based pollution sources.

4.1.2 Handling the issue within Baltic 21

Moving on, this section treats the handling of diffuse pollution sources within the Baltic 21 process. The Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea region includes agreed overall goals, sectoral goals and an *Action Programme* for sustainable development (Baltic 21, 2003a). The Baltic 21 goals for a sustainable agriculture include sufficient incomes for farmers to provide a fair standard of living, production methods that do not threaten human or animal health or degrade the environment and the gradual replacement of non-renewable resources with renewable resources (Baltic 21, 1998). The prioritised actions for the agricultural sector are according to the Baltic 21 Action Programme the following ones; education, training and information for farmers and consumers, the development of a so-called virtual research institute for sustainable agriculture, as well as the elaboration and implementation of agro-environmental legislation (Baltic 21, 1998). Baltic 21 (1998) states that Annex III of the Helsinki Convention already demands reduction of nutrient losses from agriculture and reduction of risk connected with the use of plant protection products.

Sweden and HELCOM used to be the lead parties of the agricultural sector within Baltic 21. This responsibility is now taken over by Poland and Germany. Emmerman (2003) at the Swedish Board of Agriculture has recently started taking part in the Baltic 21 *working group for agriculture* and so far has little experience from this work. It is still unclear how the work will proceed.

The Baltic 21 Action Programme also includes *Joint Actions* that concern more than one sector. An example of a joint action is the establishment of demonstration areas, with the purpose of demonstrating for farmers and the public what sustainable agriculture means in practice. These activities should also support the HELCOM Annex III on agricultural issues and Code of Good Agricultural Practice (Baltic 21, 1998). Jakobsson (2003) finds the Joint Actions where all sectors co-operate on certain measures important. She believes that the demonstration areas make it possible to test advantages and disadvantages for each sector (Jakobsson, 2003). The idea of integrating different sectors becomes clear in the example of demonstration areas.
Thus, there is an agricultural working group within Baltic 21 as well as joint actions, which connect different sectors. When it comes to the priority of agricultural discharge issues, a couple of the interviewed persons believe that it is highly prioritised. Emmerman (2003) who works at the Swedish Board of Agriculture and newly has been introduced to both HELCOM and Baltic 21, thinks that the work concerning discharge from agriculture in general, have a high priority. Jakobsson (2003) used to be the secretary-general of Baltic 21 and was in the early days involved in preparing reports for the agricultural sector. She now works at the Swedish Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering (JTI) at SLU. Jakobsson (2003) means that the issue of discharge from agriculture in general, has been paid attention since around 1987, but that long time periods are necessary before the results of the work can be seen. Lund, also at SLU, (2003) responds with the opposite view:

"I believe that it has actually quite a low priority, related to what effort is put on other things. Especially in the countries on the other side of the Baltic Sea, which are in an economically difficult position. However, the EU has now started to “tighten the screws” (Lund, 2003).

However, Jakobsson (2003) then agrees. Even though the issue seems to be prioritised, it is not easy to deal with in reality:

"Surely it has been discussed a lot since 1987 and it’s still high (on the agenda). But what is really done?" (Jakobsson, 2003).

The interaction between the two interviewees continues and Lund (2003) stresses that it is also a pedagogical task to make people understand why these issues should be prioritised. The demonstration areas are one way of making it clear and understandable (Lund, 2003). In conclusion; although agricultural matters are prioritised on the paper, they are difficult to handle practically.

4.1.3 Projects supporting HELCOM and Baltic 21

There are also different projects going on which are not run by the lead parties for the agricultural sector, but which are seen as part of the Swedish support to Baltic 21 and HELCOM. The Baltic Agricultural Run-Off Action Programme (BAAP) has been running since 1994 and is financed by SIDA. Co-ordinators for this project are Lund and Chiverton at SLU. Through this project Sweden has helped Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia with their environmental legislation, the research systems and the environmental monitoring systems, as well as developed advisory organisations and demonstration areas (Lund, 2003). Lund (2003) also describes the programme as combining a policy/research approach with a practical one.

A new project, also based on earlier experiences, is the Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP), run by HELCOM in co-operation with the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). One of its objectives is to reduce diffuse agricultural pollution (Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen, 2003). To co-operate this way seems to be a new working method. The difference between the BSRP and the BAAP is that the new project connects measures on land, by the coast and at sea in an applied project, while the
BAAP focuses on agricultural matters on land (Lund, 2003). Another project is called Development of Sustainable Agriculture and Industry in the Baltic Countries (DOSAIB). Its goal is to transfer technology and knowledge from Sweden to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to support a sustainable development within the agricultural as well as the industrial sector (Jakobsson, 2003).

Not only do these projects support the work of Baltic 21 and HELCOM, but the experiences were also used when Baltic 21 was built up. Jakobsson (2003) at SLU points out that the BAAP started already in 1994 and that Baltic 21 to a great extent builds upon experiences from BAAP, but also from the HELCOM work that Jakobsson used to be involved in. This indicates that Baltic 21, HELCOM and different projects are all closely connected. One of the respondents at SLU clarifies the connection between the projects and Baltic 21 and their different roles. On the one hand, there is the policy level including the work by the secretariat of Baltic 21 and on the other hand, there is a more practical level, the work done by the countries:

"Baltic 21 is an umbrella organisation and what is to be done "on the ground" is done by others – by the countries themselves or with the support of other money. --- In fact, everything is connected – that is how you have to look upon it. HELCOM, Baltic 21 and the projects are one. Somehow they can be viewed as one, but they have different roles in the context" (Lund, 2003).

To summarise, there are or have been working groups for agricultural issues within both HELCOM and Baltic 21. The future handling of these issues are discussed, particularly within HELCOM. In the agricultural field there are also projects like the BAAP, the BSRP and the DOSAIB, which support the HELCOM and Baltic 21 work. Thus, there are different levels of the Baltic Sea co-operation and HELCOM, Baltic 21 and more practically oriented projects play different roles in the co-operation. The relationship between the two Baltic Sea organisations HELCOM and Baltic 21 will be treated next.

4.2 The relationship HELCOM – Baltic 21

How does the work through HELCOM and Baltic 21 on diffuse land-based pollution relate to and complement one another?

In this section, the two organisations will be related to one another to see what their roles are. The theories of Hjorth presented in chapter 3 will be used for this purpose. This section also treats the role of the EU; a new actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation.

4.2.1 Differences and relations between HELCOM and Baltic 21

HELCOM and Baltic 21 seem to work with similar issues, as both organisations aim at an improvement of the Baltic Sea environment. What are the differences between their work? Is there a need for both organisations?

There are differences between the two organisations. One of the most obvious differences is how wide their working fields are. HELCOM works with environmental issues, while Baltic 21 includes all three aspects of the sustainability concept in their work, i.e. the social and economical dimensions as well. Emmerman (2003) at the Swedish Board of Agriculture, mentions this wider approach of Baltic
21 and so does Fallenius (2003), the co-ordinator of HELCOM issues within the Swedish EPA. Fallenius (2003) continues to say that she believes that the two organisations complement one another:

"They have a sister relation. You could say that they complement one another. HELCOM works with the effects on the sea and Baltic 21 has a wider concept" (Fallenius, 2003).

A second difference between the organisations is the fact that HELCOM has an international convention to fall back on. Baltic 21 has the action programme and more of a voluntary approach. Since HELCOM as its starting point take an international convention, i.e. the Helsinki Convention, it could in this sense be seen as what Hjorth (1992) calls a legal strategy. Hjorth (1992) means that a problem with this strategy is that the states are responsible to act only after the pollution has occurred and the effects have been confirmed. Thus, it is a curative rather than a preventive strategy. Jakobsson (2003) at SLU also points out that Baltic 21 has more of a preventive strategy. She stresses that the Baltic 21 process is about preventing future problems, while HELCOM rather has a curative approach and acts when the damage has already been done:

"HELCOM first of all works with marine environmental issues and cleaning up afterwards, while Baltic 21 is meant to work ahead with the strategies and look at sustainable development across a wide range of sectors and not to work within the catchment area, but within the whole geographical area of all these countries. That’s a huge difference” (Jakobsson, 2003).

A legal strategy demands political support, according to Hjorth (1992), if the principles are to be complied with by states and implemented in the practical policies of states. Apart from being a legal strategy, HELCOM could also be viewed as a scientific-technological strategy. In the article 24 of the Helsinki Convention, it is stated that the contracting parties undertake to co-operate in the fields of science, technology and other research. HELCOM demands that the countries report on the condition of the environment and compile discharge data every year (Lund, 2003). According to Hjorth (1992), HELCOM also provided an organisation for the scientific-technological form of co-operation (Hjorth, 1992).

Baltic 21 on the other hand, could be defined as a political-programme strategy as it builds upon on an action programme. The problem with this kind of strategy is that they in some cases are not based on scientific evidence, means Hjorth (1992).

Fallenius (2003) believes that since Baltic 21 does not have a convention, their work might be more difficult. Lund (2003), co-ordinator for the BAAP and the BSRP, means that the voluntary approach of Baltic 21 is a problem and a strength at the same time. Emmerman (2003) also speaks of the voluntary approach of Baltic 21, the bottom-up perspective and the possibility to work with exchange of experiences and information. Ultimately, what Hjorth (1992) emphasises is that different strategies need to be combined for the international co-operation to work, i.e. HELCOM as well as Baltic 21 could play important parts in the Baltic Sea co-operation. Which approach is the most efficient for the protection of the environment of the Baltic Sea, this study does not aim to answer. What could be said, however, is that the strategy
of integrating environmental aspects into other sectors, as in the sustainability concept, is increasingly used to handle environmental issues in society.

There is also a difference in available resources between HELCOM and Baltic 21, which could affect the extent of the work. According to Jakobsson (2003) the Baltic 21 secretariat consists of 2-3 people, while the HELCOM secretariat has about 8 employees.

So, HELCOM and Baltic 21 differ, for example when it comes to the kind of strategy used, but could it be possible to keep them together? During the group interview at SLU, the interviewees discussed whether it would be possible to just have one organisation in the Baltic Sea area:

"But do you think it would be possible to keep them together as one organisation? If you assume that there is a need for something around the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe" (Lund, 2003). "I don’t find it impossible" (Jakobsson, 2003). "In principle, there could be one organisation working with sustainable development, but that still dealt with data and statistics" (Lund, 2003). "Yes, that is fully imaginable" (Jakobsson, 2003).

This is an interesting idea. Jakobsson (2003) at SLU says later on that now that Germany is a lead party for the agricultural sector within Baltic 21, the work will be done there instead and HELCOM could be playing out its role.

Emmerman (2003) at the Swedish Board of Agriculture, believes that there have been discussions on how to divide the responsibility between the organisations, as there is a risk that the same work is otherwise done within the EU, the Nordic Council, HELCOM and Baltic 21. Linderholm (2003) believes that it is inefficient to have HELCOM and Baltic 21 meetings with more or less the same content. Interestingly, there are sometimes even too many forms of co-operation to make the process effective.

The relation between HELCOM and Baltic 21 was asked about in the interviewees. According to Linderholm (2003) at the Swedish EPA, there are no projects between HELCOM and Baltic 21, but there have been common meetings. Within the industrial sector there is some co-operation though (Stackerud, 2003). Stackerud (2003), representative within HELCOM LAND, has a feeling that Baltic 21 and HELCOM sometimes compete in the same places, at least it used to be the case. Fallenius (2003) says that there is no decided co-operation between HELCOM and Baltic 21 in agricultural matters, but there has been some co-operation.

However, HELCOM is a member in the Baltic 21 process like all other organisations (Jakobsson, 2003). HELCOM has also been the lead party for the Baltic 21 agricultural sector (Fallenius, 2003). Also, Baltic 21 is an observer within HELCOM (Jakobsson, 2003). Baltic 21 is also meant to complement international, national and local initiatives and the work by for example HELCOM. The EU dimension is also considered. The Helsinki Convention should be taken into account in the Baltic 21 process (Baltic 21, 1998). It is further stated that it is important to co-ordinate the Baltic 21 Action Programme and the HELCOM Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Action Programme (Baltic 21, 1998). HELCOM will be closely involved in
implementing the environmental part of Baltic 21 (Baltic 21, 1998). This signifies that the two organisations HELCOM and Baltic 21 still keep some contact with one another.

To conclude, HELCOM and Baltic 21 could be viewed as different strategies that complement one another in the Baltic Sea co-operation. However, it is still relevant to consider their respective roles and responsibilities and the possibility of just having one of these organisations. This is especially relevant because of the more significant role of the EU. More on the EU next.

4.2.2 EU – the new actor

Some of the states around the Baltic Sea are preparing their membership of the European Union (EU). The accession of the three Baltic Republics and Poland to the EU signifies that from May 2004, eight of the nine countries around the Baltic Sea will be EU members (HELCOM, 2003c), Russia being the exception. According to Baltic 21 (1998), the applicant countries will prioritise environmental measures related to the EU accession process the next few years. Many of the interviewed persons are also of this opinion (Jakobsson, 2003; Fallenius, 2003).

In the process of getting into the EU, the work within Baltic 21 and the different projects seems to have been useful for the new members. Jakobsson (2003) describes how they in the BAAP started working with the language and taught them about environmental issues, which was a good preparation for the EU membership. The HELCOM Annex III is also similar to the EU legislation such as the Nitrate Directive (Emmerman, 2003; Fallenius, 2003). The EU has also created a greater pressure on the countries to work with these issues, and the motivation has increased (Lund, 2003). Chiverton (2003) at SLU means that the EU membership also signifies that these countries will be able to apply for EU financing.

The EU enlargement makes several of the interviewees mention the role of the EU in the Baltic Sea co-operation. The three interviewed persons at the Swedish EPA share the view that the EU is becoming increasingly important as a forum for co-operation in environmental issues in the Baltic Sea area. Fallenius (2003) means that agricultural matters should be treated within the EU, for example in connection to the revising of CAP. Linderholm (2003) also believes that it is possible to concentrate on the environmental work within EU. Stackerud (2003) says that when it is possible to treat the content of a HELCOM recommendation within the EU, it should be dealt with there. She points out that the work will still continue, but within EU instead. Emmerman (2003) at the Swedish Board of Agriculture shares this view:

“The work trying to deal with the Baltic Sea situation is not less prioritised – it is about the way of working. You don’t want to come up with new laws or new commitments on top of the far-reaching demands within the EU. Ultimately, it is a question of resources”
(Emmerman, 2003).

There seems to be a shift towards the EU, when it comes to handling environmental issues around the Baltic Sea. However, Stackerud (2003) can also see that it might be difficult to keep up the co-operation with Russia:

“My fear is really that if we now decrease the work within HELCOM concerning chemicals, which we are about to do, I’m afraid that we will
Because of the risk of losing the co-operation with Russia, Stackerud (2003) stresses that she finds it important to keep a forum for co-operation. According to Stackerud (2003), Russia has found the HELCOM recommendations useful.

Now that the EU is becoming more important as an actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation, the inevitable question is what roles HELCOM and Baltic 21 will play in the future. Because Baltic 21 is a voluntary organisation, it is not considered as important as the EU (Jakobsson, 2003). The roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21 could be affected. Lund (2003) at SLU believes so:

"The development of the EU may affect the roles of Baltic 21 and HELCOM. Clearly, it has done. There is a new, strong actor" (Lund, 2003).

Fallenius (2003) and Stackerud (2003), both at the Swedish EPA, discuss the role of HELCOM in terms of what value can be added from the HELCOM process. Fallenius (2003) says that there will shortly be discussions on the future role of HELCOM in the light of the EU directives and the coming EU Marine Strategy. The role is likely to change. Stackerud (2003) means that it is important for their credibility that HELCOM does not do what others do:

"The whole process is about finding out what contributes with something extra. What is the "added value" in this job? That will be really important in the future. HELCOM is not supposed to do more than what is needed as a supplement to the EU work" (Stackerud, 2003).

The representative of HELCOM LAND believes that HELCOM will still exist as a forum for co-operation and that agricultural matters such as nitrogen issues will increase in significance (Stackerud, 2003). In the group interview at SLU, the interviewees were asked if they believed that the roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21 will decrease in importance, now that the EU is becoming stronger as an actor. This is how they discussed:

-"There are those who believe so. I'm not sure about it. It depends on what happens with Russia and how they fit into the co-operation towards the EU. At the same time, Baltic 21 has a great chance. For example the Mediterranean has many interest organisations and co-operation organisations of their own that work for the region in an EU perspective. I believe that we must have a Baltic Sea region co-operation organ that also works for our region. The Mediterranean has been very successful. So, there is a need for them, but it depends on what our politicians say” (Jakobsson, 2003).

-"Do you believe that there will always be two organisations? They are similar, Baltic 21 and HELCOM” (Lund, 2003).

-"Yes, yet not really. That’s the problem – people believe that they are alike, but they are not really. People mistake them for one another, although the work is in fact very well divided” (Jakobsson, 2003).

Could the EU become the new lead actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation? Would that mean that there is a change in the regime? The discussion on the future roles of HELCOM, Baltic 21 and the EU will continue in chapter 5. Now on to the question of what the work through HELCOM and Baltic 21 has led to. In the next section, the consequences of the work will be treated.
4.3 The consequences of the work

What are the consequences for the environment of the Baltic Sea and for the national environmental work in Sweden, of the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution through HELCOM and Baltic 21?

The goals within HELCOM and Baltic 21 have to be achieved. In this section, the consequences according to the interviewees, of the work within HELCOM and Baltic 21 will be discussed. Firstly, how the environment has been affected will be treated and secondly, the effects on the Swedish environmental work are dealt with.

4.3.1 Improvements of the environment

HELCOM has worked for about 30 years with environmental issues regarding the Baltic Sea and Baltic 21 has existed for about 5 years. It seems relevant to pose the question of what achievements have been made through the Baltic Sea co-operation. Has the environmental situation of the sea improved?

HELCOM (2003a) means that the targets set up in the Ministerial Declaration of reductions of 50% in nutrient inputs into the Baltic Sea during 1985-1995, has been difficult to achieve, especially when it comes to nitrogen inputs. The representative of HELCOM LAND means that it has been difficult to evaluate if the target of 50% reduction has been reached, as there have not been enough figures available for an evaluation (Stackerud, 2003). On the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP), HELCOM (2003b) says that the nutrient loads in rivers remain too high, despite reductions in the use of fertilisers and other changes in farmland that have reduced nutrient leaching. It is stressed that the implementation of the Annex III of the Helsinki Convention and the Code of Good Agricultural Practice must still be promoted.

Within Baltic 21, so-called indicators are used to evaluate the improvements of the environmental situation. Baltic 21 (1998) describes that the indicator-based information and reporting system enables monitoring of the result of the Baltic 21 actions. Examples of indicators concerning agriculture are load of nutrients to the Baltic Sea and nitrogen and phosphorus fertiliser use (Baltic 21, 2003a). Although the indicators have been developed, few have used them, says Jakobsson (2003) at SLU. According to a Baltic 21 report (2003b), the implementation work confirms that achieving sustainable development is a difficult task and that the agricultural sector is still unsustainable, especially regarding an inadequate nutrient balance in most countries.

When asked about the consequences of the work within HELCOM and Baltic 21, the general opinion amongst the interviewees seems to be that it is difficult to tell what the consequences really are for the environment. Stackerud (2003) within HELCOM LAND believes that the achievements have been more successful concerning discharge of phosphorus than of nitrogen. Fallenius (2003) at the Swedish EPA means that unfortunately the discharge from agriculture has not decreased much as a consequence of the work within HELCOM. Lund (2003) at SLU says that small changes in the coastal areas can be noted, but not in the marine environment. He also says that it takes long time periods to see the results of the efforts. It is important to
find out if the situation is improving (Lund, 2003). Furthermore, Lund (2003) who works with the BAAP and BSRP projects stresses that there are different levels of the work and since Baltic 21 deals mainly with the policy level, it may be difficult to tell of the practical achievements.

Jakobsson (2003) at SLU says that she is certain that the work will give effects, but that it takes time. Linderholm (2003) at the Swedish EPA means that even if the consequences are hard to tell, the co-operation should give results if everyone is working for it. Emmerman (2003) has only just begun working with these issues and feels that he has not been part of the work so long as to be able to tell what consequences it has had. However, he believes that attention for the issues and exchange of experiences is a positive thing.

To summarise this discussion, the consequences of the work within HELCOM and Baltic 21 are according to the interviewed persons difficult to tell. The environmental effects take time to discover, though.

### 4.3.2 Effects on the Swedish national environmental work

In the interviews, another kind of consequences of the work through HELCOM and Baltic 21 were also mentioned; the influence on the Swedish work. All three interviewees at the Swedish EPA believe that the HELCOM work has had small effects on the Swedish work in these issues, for example regarding new legislation. However, Linderholm (2003) and Stackerud (2003) believe that it might have been helpful for other countries:

> "From a Swedish point of view, it has not meant much, because we have done the most in this area. For HELCOM I believe that it has given quite a lot of support, especially to the former Eastern countries before the EU enlargement. --- I believe that HELCOM recommendations have been used" (Stackerud, 2003).

It thus seems that the consequences for the Swedish national environmental work are small. The next section will deal with the Baltic Sea co-operation in practice and its problems and possibilities.

### 4.4 The work in practice – pros and cons

What are the possibilities and the problems respectively with the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution within HELCOM and Baltic 21?

Moving on to the how the work functions in practice, the possibilities and the problems with the co-operation are treated in this section.

#### 4.4.1 Possibilities of international co-operation

All of the interviewees seem to share the view that it is necessary to work internationally in environmental matters of this kind and they find international co-operation a good thing (Linderholm, 2003; Fallenius, 2003; Emmerman, 2003; Lund, 2003; Jakobsson, 2003). The representative of HELCOM LAND finds it positive to have HELCOM as a forum for discussions (Stackerud, 2003). Jakobsson (2003) stresses that pollution does not stop at the state borders, which is why it is important that everyone helps out:
“Pollution does not stop at the state border – it is about catchment areas. It is incredibly important to co-ordinate the work, to have common goals, to be able to exchange experiences, to have networks, to have common calibrations and to have conferences together. Of course we have to help each other” (Jakobsson, 2003).

When financial resources exist for projects and the right people are involved, the co-operation is a positive thing (Jakobsson, 2003). It seems that if there is a will amongst the states, achievements can also be reached. It is a question of what the countries want to achieve with the co-operation (Lund, 2003). At the start people really wanted to do something within the agricultural sector and there was a strong feeling of consensus (Jakobsson, 2003). Emmerman (2003) who has experience from the EU, means that there are possibilities for organisations to influence the work. He believes that contacts between different countries, NGOs and the industry are important and that it can increase the understanding of different conditions.

What is important in international co-operation and other kinds of work, is according to the representative within the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA), the process itself and groups that function (Linderholm, 2003). Emmerman (2003) also means that the work is dependent on the steering of the groups. Thus, the leadership seems to be of importance for the success of the work.

Co-operation between states also gives the countries the opportunity to learn from each other. Stackerud (2003) talks about sharing good and bad experiences with other countries. Jakobsson (2003) means that Sweden recently went through preparations and adjustments to be able to join the EU and these experiences can now be used by other countries. Fallenius (2003) believes that the HELCOM Recommendations have been significant in the former Eastern countries, before the EU preparations began. Also, the results of one of the projects were used in the legislation of the countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Jakobsson, 2003), which should prove that these projects are recognised.

Another positive consequence of the work that Chiverton (2003) at SLU mentions is increased awareness in environmental issues in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Lund (2003), also at SLU, agrees and means that it has helped prepare these countries for the EU membership. Lund (2003) also mentions that Baltic 21 and HELCOM have made way for different projects.

Thus, co-operation is a necessity to deal with environmental issues in the Baltic Sea area and it brings opportunities for countries to learn from each other and to raise the environmental awareness.

4.4.2 Problems of international co-operation

Obviously, international co-operation also meets challenges. The interviewees were asked what they found problematic in their practical work. Some of the following aspects are specific for international co-operation, while others could be seen as being of a more general character. Firstly, international co-operation is about making countries agree upon certain measures, which can be time consuming and patience demanding:

“Obviously, the difficulty is that all countries have to agree, but it is
also the only possibility. Of course it takes longer time, but it is very important, so you have to have patience" (Fallenius, 2003).

At times Emmerman (2003), with experience from international co-operation, also finds the process of the work slow. Co-operation is a matter of reaching consensus, which has proven difficult in the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) within HELCOM. The group has not been able to agree upon a definition of agriculture:

"Since then it has been revealed many times that we disagree on what agriculture is and that a common definition is really needed. Is it agriculture to have one cow or are ten cows needed or is it enough with two rabbits? The German delegation has had the opinion that if you have more than 100 cows, it is not agriculture any longer, but a factory, which means that it is not necessary to remove the manure to arable land. It is a view that we do not share in Sweden. --- It is an obstacle that we cannot agree upon a definition of agriculture. It is a huge obstacle. The job is about agreeing on something, but we cannot even agree upon what agriculture is" (Linderholm, 2003).

This is an interesting example of the difficulties when countries are to agree upon a common definition. In a similar way, Jakobsson (2003) points at the importance of understanding the meaning of a concept such as sustainable development. She believes that the difference between sustainable development and environmental issues is difficult for many people to understand (Jakobsson, 2003). When it is not clear to everyone involved what sustainable development is, or if different interpretations are used, the work is made more difficult. The implication of sustainability has to become clearer and fully incorporated in policies and political decision-making (Baltic 21, 1998). Baltic 21 (1998) states that the lack of knowledge, training and awareness regarding sustainable development, is a fundamental obstacle that needs to be overcome.

To be able to reach a common decision, it is necessary that the different parts are able to communicate and understand each other. Linderholm (2003) talks about how problematic international co-operation can be when people do not understand one another. Obviously, language problems can be obstacles towards understanding, but according to Linderholm (2003), explaining a certain point of view is also important.

Something that could be said to be a specific problem for international co-operation, are the cultural differences between the countries. For example, there are obvious differences between the former Eastern and Western countries, in respect of working methods and knowledge base on for example chemicals. Stackerud (2003) of the HELCOM LAND explains that Sweden has looked upon the sources of the pollution, whereas in the former Eastern countries the focus has been upon the discharge itself. The knowledge on what chemicals are circulating in society has differed between former Eastern and Western countries (Stackerud, 2003).

Fallenius (2003) at the Swedish EPA shares the view that the knowledge of what problems there are regarding hazardous substances can be low in some countries, which creates difficulties for the co-operation. Another problem is that different countries may have different strategies and approaches when it comes to handling environmental problems. Regarding nutrient inputs to the Baltic Sea, Sweden has had a “load approach” and has wanted to concentrate on pollution sources that they have found cost-effective, while all other countries has held a “source specific approach”
and has wished to minimise all pollution sources (Stackerud, 2003). That the countries use different strategies must make the co-operation more difficult. Stackerud (2003) also believes that it takes time to find a common platform for the work, because of the former differences between the states:

“We are from two different worlds. In our luggage we keep our former political values and it takes time to find a common platform” (Stackerud, 2003).

The practical conditions differ between the countries. Stackerud (2003) believes that there is a lack of administrative resources in the former Eastern countries, but that the situation is likely to be a different one in five years’ time, as the new EU members are currently working with these issues. With increased resources, it will be easier to discuss and compare figures between different countries (Stackerud, 2003). According to Baltic 21 (1998) there are still barriers like incomplete legislation, to a balanced economic development in the new democracies, which will however be overcome in the long run.

However, there are also problems of a more general character, which can occur in international co-operation as well as in other kinds of working environments. Linderholm (2003) speaks of problems on the group level, as a reason why the co-operation in the WGA within HELCOM does not work satisfactorily. The steering of the group has in her view not worked the way she would have wished. As earlier mentioned in 4.4.1, the leadership could be an important factor determining the outcome of the work.

Similarly, Jakobsson (2003) believes that the steering of the agricultural sector within Baltic 21 has been problematic, at least as long as she was involved in the Baltic 21 process. There were not enough resources to carry out the action programme and instead of prioritising and choosing to work on a specific part of it, little happened, except for some on-going projects. She continues:

“Personally, I am disappointed that there were no possibilities to have a strong leadership of the sector – someone who was actually prepared to come up with strategies and keep working with the action programme, create groups and get people to work” (Jakobsson, 2003).

She stresses that she does not know how the situation is today. Another problem concerning people and their roles, is the fact that the persons who are sent to participate in the meetings are negotiators, which are not completely initiated in the issues. This is something that Linderholm (2003) has experienced:

“The problem when you are participating in an international meeting is that you have brought instructions and you do not always understand them. --- I believe that is the explanation why international work is difficult. The sent-out experts are usually not experts, but they are negotiators. They do not really understand with what they are working, but they are professional negotiators. I believe that makes these jobs so very frustrating sometimes. That is my own interpretation” (Linderholm, 2003).

The right persons with the right kind of knowledge and with the authority to act, is a condition for international co-operation to work. Baltic 21 (2003b) means that a
concern for the future process is the unbalanced leadership for the sectors among the member countries.

Many of the interviewed persons also see the lack of resources as a great problem, both at a personal and a financial level. Stackerud (2003) means that the major problem is the lack of money and of people. What takes a lot of time is the HELCOM reporting, which is why it has been decided that measures that all states have implemented, do not have to be reported every third year (Stackerud, 2003). Jakobsson (2003) means that it can be difficult to run the process if there is no possibility to finance the projects. It is a disadvantage that Baltic 21 has no money of its own:

“It is a great disadvantage that generally within Baltic 21 there is no “earmarked” money, but you compete in the general market. The countries do not always prioritise Baltic 21” (Jakobsson, 2003).

In a Baltic 21 document (1998) it is confirmed that all financing will be done within the limits of the existing resources. The financing for the implementation of Baltic 21 will come from a country’s own public or private sectors. Emmerman (2003) shares the view that there is a lack of resources, when it comes to time. Binding obligations must be prioritised, which can affect this kind of more voluntary work (Emmerman, 2003).

It is difficult to find time for everything and how much time to spend on an issue could depend on how it is prioritised politically. Obviously, if the countries do not prioritise the work within Baltic 21 and HELCOM, it is difficult to improve the co-operation:

“What means a lot for this kind of work is also what is decided upon on a political level and how the prioritisation is on the political level” (Emmerman, 2003).

Politically however, these issues can be difficult to handle. Although they are high on the agenda, not enough happens in reality, Jakobsson (2003) says during the group interview at SLU. Lund (2003) then continues to say that although it is known that agriculture accounts for a large proportion of the discharge and large amounts of money are invested, it takes such a long time to see the results of the work that it could be easier to let somebody else do the work. Jakobsson (2003) says later on that since there are many forms of co-operation, the countries do not always prioritise Baltic 21. What seems to matter for how much the countries can prioritise a specific issue, is political responsibility nationally:

“It is obvious that there is sometimes a lack of financial and political responsibility. It is not easy. Some countries do not take their responsibility and others really put down an effort. It is really unequal” (Jakobsson, 2003).

There is a problem if one country alone wants to take all the honour for a common action, which Jakobsson (2003) has experienced. Another problem is the different levels in the Baltic 21 and HELCOM work. Baltic 21 works on the policy level and it can be difficult for them to answer questions on what has been achieved. However, Baltic 21 is closely connected to the more practical dimensions of the projects:
“It is a problem for Baltic 21 that what they do is concerned a lot with policies and work on an overarching level. Questions easily come up on what is really done. Everything is connected – that is how you have to look upon it. HELCOM, Baltic 21 and the projects are one. Somehow they can be viewed as one, but they have different roles in the context” (Lund, 2003).

Thus, there are different actors formulating the policies and working practically to achieve the goals. Lund (2003) also mentions another aspect of the different levels in the process. He finds it important that the measures are connected with the farmers’ economy. This accentuates the importance of understanding the wider perspective and it also brings up the question of how to unite different kinds of goals. Sectoral goals could easily come in conflict with one another. Baltic 21 (1998) means that the co-operation between different sectors is insufficient, when it comes to problem-solving and promoting cross-sectoral solutions. Also, conflicting interests and goals are inevitable, since the term sustainable development includes values (Baltic 21, 1998). Linderholm (2003) believes that it can be difficult to find a balance between different goals or requirements. It is easier to discuss one problem at a time than to see the wider context (Linderholm, 2003). This accentuates the need for someone who can co-ordinate the work on a higher level, who has the ability to work across different sectors:

“I also believe that it is important with someone who has the whole view and looks at sustainability for the whole society – someone who is able link us sector-oriented people together” (Lund, 2003).

To summarise this section on the problems of international co-operation, agreeing upon common definitions and decisions are difficult and time-consuming. When countries use different working methods and have different knowledge on the environmental situation, it creates a further problem. Communication and explaining a certain point of view becomes vital. Factors of a more general character that can affect the co-operation are the leadership of working groups, available resources and the political will to act. The obstacles mentioned in this section, imply that international co-operation could be improved. In what way is discussed next.

4.5 How to move on

How could the co-operation on diffuse land-based pollution within HELCOM and Baltic 21 be improved?

After having gained some knowledge and heard of the experiences in the practical work of the Baltic Sea co-operation, it would be interesting to find out if the work could somehow be improved. This section builds upon the experiences and opinions of the interviewees.

First of all, increased resources are something that many of the interviewed persons ask for. They feel they need more time to work with the issues (Linderholm, 2003) as well as financial resources (Emmerman, 2003) for the work within HELCOM and Baltic 21:

“There could be “earmarked” money, so that there was something to work towards. Maybe there could be competitions towards sustainability so that there was something to plan for together” (Jakobsson, 2003).
Concerning the group level of the work, continuity is an aspect that Linderholm (2003) of the WGA finds important for an improvement of international co-operation. This is important since it takes time for a group to function well and for the representatives to understand each other:

“I believe continuity is very important. --- They have not learnt how everyone works in the group. It is important that if you get into a job, you have to finish it. You cannot jump back and forth. That is why you should not start new groups all the time” (Linderholm, 2003).

Encouragement is something that Jakobsson (2003) at SLU mentions as an important aspect of the co-operation. The farmers have to be encouraged for the measures they take. For the work to improve, the initiative within the Baltic Sea co-operation also has to come from all countries. Jakobsson (2003) speaks of the importance of getting every country actively engaged in the planning of the projects, which has also been aimed at in the BAAP project. Stackerud (2003) of the HELCOM LAND would like to see more of an initiative from the former Eastern countries, when it comes to what they want and need. Emmerman (2003) at the Swedish Board of Agriculture wishes to have more exchange of information and experiences and to use good examples:

“Personally, I’m in favour of exchange of information and experiences, like seminars – to show good examples of how things can be solved. It is also about making sure that the right people show up at those kind of meetings” (Emmerman, 2003).

In a similar way, Lund (2003) at SLU would like the experiences from the projects to be used more:

“I believe that the commissions have to be more aware of the projects within their framework, although Baltic 21 has been quite good at that. They do not use the projects. HELCOM could use the BAAP a lot more than what they have done. We have put pressure on them to do so” (Lund, 2003).

What is needed according to Stackerud (2003) is time; to await that the EU legislation is implemented in all countries. It will make it possible to get knowledge of the situation in the whole of the Baltic Sea area, before deciding on how to move on. However, she believes that the situation will change quickly and it may be a different one in just five years time (Stackerud, 2003). Linderholm (2003) also mentions that people need time to adapt to the directions; that it is an on-going process.

What makes the work problematic, is also that it takes years to see the effects in the environment of the measures taken today. This makes Lund (2003), co-ordinator of the BAAP and BSRP, consider the possibility of finding other working methods. He stresses that there have been differences between the Baltic Sea countries, but also that the co-operation is dependent on what the states want:

“You have to remember that there have been great differences between the countries around the Baltic Sea before the iron curtain fell. It has been an advantage, but also a disadvantage. I believe that you could consider the working methods, how the commissions work and how to work more together. What do we want? You have to remember that
Lund (2003) says on the issue of finding new forms of co-operation, that both Baltic 21 and the BSRP test a different way of working, across the sectors. The policy and the application levels are connected with one another.

Thus, there is room for improvement and these mentioned proposals and opinions from the interviewees are just some ideas of what could be done. In the next chapter, the results from the analysis will be discussed further.
5. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of the interviews particularly highlights two different aspects of the Baltic Sea co-operation, which will be further developed in this chapter; problems in the practical co-operation and possible improvements, as well as the future roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21, with respect to the EU enlargement.

Before moving on to these two topics, a few conditions for the study will be discussed. Firstly, it is important to remember that the choice of studying the particular organisations of HELCOM and Baltic 21 limits the outcome of the study, in the sense that only organisations at a state level are included. Furthermore, the focus upon discharge from agriculture implies that the results are applicable only to this specific study area. This kind of diffuse pollution is difficult to handle, but not less important. After having performed the interviews, it is obvious that since most of the work in this field is going through restructuring, it could have been easier to have looked upon for example the transport sector, which is another source of diffuse land-based pollution. However, the restructuring within the agricultural sector, could be a reason why the interviews made visible many interesting problems. Also, on the other hand, HELCOM and Baltic 21 as a whole are going through changes and maybe the uncertainties of the future work would have been apparent in any sector.

The Swedish perspective applied on the study is another factor delimiting the study. In further studies, a complete picture of the Baltic Sea co-operation in agricultural matters should be aimed at. Especially important are the views of the lead parties of the agricultural sector within Baltic 21 and the steering countries within different HELCOM groups. Also, new studies in a few years time could give interesting results, as the conditions for the co-operation is changing due to the EU enlargement. Generalisations of the study should be made carefully, however the results can be related to other studies with the delimitations of this study in mind.

5.1 Practical co-operation problems and their solutions

To be able to create a better environment it is necessary that the co-operation between countries works well, which is why an improvement of the conditions for the co-operation is important. To a large extent, the interviews focused upon the difficulties within the Baltic Sea environmental co-operation. Possibly, it is easier to discuss the problems than it is to talk about the more well-functioning parts of the work. However, problems are interesting in the sense that they can give a picture of the conditions for environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area and that they leave room for improvements. In this first section of the chapter, some practical aspects from the interviews are discussed, which are found important to consider in international co-operation, but maybe not easily improved.

The effort-demanding process of reaching consensus, is obviously made even more difficult and time consuming in international co-operation through the fact that several countries are involved. To be able to agree on decisions, good communication is especially important. At least one of the interviewees pointed at the importance of understanding one another and said that explaining is needed.
Supposedly, speaking the same language is not enough, but it is also about trying to be open to different perspectives. One way of raising the awareness and increasing the understanding for one another, could be to exchange information and experiences between the countries, which is asked for by one of the interviewees. This is one of the challenges for the Baltic Sea co-operation.

Other difficulties are the cultural differences that may appear as distinctions in working methods and consequently in knowledge base, which the representative of the HELCOM LAND found problematic when it came to comparing figures between different countries. In the Baltic Sea Region, with former Eastern and Western countries, these cultural differences are probably more obvious than in other international co-operation. The fact that almost all states around the Baltic Sea will shortly be members of the European Union (EU), could signify that the working methods are likely to become more similar. However, social and economical aspects could still stay different.

What the Baltic Sea co-operation needs in the next step when the decisions are to be implemented is a political will to act. Without it, little can be achieved. This was stressed in the interviews. A couple of the interviewees also mentioned that the initiative within the co-operation should come from all states. An interesting aspect is also the different levels of the work. There are on the one hand the secretariats of HELCOM and Baltic 21, which create policies and have an overview of the work. On the other hand, there are the practical oriented projects such as the BAAP and the BSRP. How could these levels be connected? According to one of the interviewed persons, the projects should be used more by the secretariats. Once again, communication is vital for the co-operation to work and for experiences and information to be exchanged.

What was also brought up in the interviews was the need to integrate different sectors. Baltic 21 (1998) also states that sustainability aspects should be integrated into the different sectors and that the interdisciplinary research should be strengthened and the knowledge used, which shows that these initiatives are important.

Other problematic features of the co-operation mentioned in the interviews, are of a more general character. Not surprisingly, how a group functions seems to be of importance for the outcome of the efforts. The leadership of the group was particularly mentioned by a couple of the interviewed persons, as an important factor. This raises the question of placing the right person at the appropriate post.

The lack of resources was also mentioned, which is probably a general problem in most work. The Baltic 21 process has no financial resources of its own. Obviously, it would be easier to plan and to take action if there was a fund. The main question however, should be how to use the available resources in the most efficient way. There are several forms of co-operation in the Baltic Sea area, so where should the time, money and people be invested? It is important to find ways of co-operating that are effective and that makes improvements of the environmental situation possible. Because many environmental problems in the Baltic Sea region are transboundary, co-operation between states is vital. The future of the Baltic Sea co-operation is treated in the next section.
5.2 The future of Baltic Sea co-operation

As has been discussed earlier, the work in agricultural issues within HELCOM and Baltic 21, is going through changes. There has been a Working Group on Agriculture within HELCOM, which is now closed down, but there is still a group for land-based pollution – HELCOM LAND. Within Baltic 21 there is a working group for agriculture. It is still uncertain how the work in agricultural issues will proceed within HELCOM and Baltic 21. However, the restructuring of the work is true for the whole of HELCOM and Baltic 21. What will the future of the Baltic Sea co-operation look like?

Firstly, the relationship between HELCOM and Baltic 21 is interesting to look at. How come these organisations do not co-operate more? Their co-operation could be increased. Hjorth (1992) means that different strategies for co-operation complement one another. In that sense, they can all be useful to create a better environment for the Baltic Sea. However, the interviews made clear that there can sometimes be too many forms of co-operation and in the group interview there was a discussion on the possibility to have just one of the forums HELCOM or Baltic 21. There was also a discussion on the added value that HELCOM could bring. A proof that there could still be a need for a forum apart from the EU, is the fact that there is a regional co-operation in the Mediterranean, which was mentioned by one of the interviewees.

Because of the preparations for the EU membership amongst the accession countries, EU has increased in importance in the Baltic Sea area. All countries around the Baltic Sea, apart from Russia, will be EU members in May 2004. Several of the interviewees have felt this shift towards the EU co-operation. What will happen to HELCOM and Baltic 21?

The environment ministers within HELCOM met in Bremen, Germany, at the end of June 2003. Since many of the interviewees referred to this meeting and meant that it would clarify how the work within HELCOM and Baltic 21 would proceed, it is relevant to take a look at the outcome of the meeting. According to HELCOM (2003c), a Ministerial Declaration and ten new HELCOM Recommendations were adopted, for instance a new Recommendation on reduction of pollution from agriculture. On combating eutrophication, it was agreed that EU directives such as the Nitrate Directive should be fully implemented and that nutrients should be used more efficiently within agriculture. It was further agreed that HELCOM should continue to serve as a mouthpiece for the Baltic Sea region and that a working plan for its future role should be adopted in March 2004 (HELCOM, 2003c). It thus seems as if HELCOM will still be used as a forum for the Baltic Sea co-operation. However, in 2004, its role should become clearer.

The meeting of the ministers has also resulted in an invitation from Sweden and Finland to the other countries around the Baltic Sea, to participate in preparing an application to the UN organ International Maritime Organization (IMO) on classifying the Baltic Sea as a specifically sensitive sea (The Swedish Ministry of the Environment, 2003a). All countries except for Russia are willing to take part in this work and the first meeting will be held in September 2003 (The Swedish Ministry of the Environment, 2003a).
Furthermore, in late June 2003 Havsmiljökommissionen (the Commission on the Environment of the Sea) presented their proposals for measures to be taken to improve the sea environment. Amongst other measures, the commission proposed that the Helsinki Convention is revised and that the decisions are made legally binding (The Swedish Ministry of the Environment, 2003c).

Regarding Baltic 21, the Swedish Ministry of the Environment (2003b) states that the environment ministers of the 11 countries around the Baltic Sea will meet in late August 2003 to discuss the future co-operation within Baltic 21. Thus, the discussions are on-going, on the future roles of Baltic 21 as well as HELCOM.

The EU system with its rules, principles, norms and decision-making procedures seems to increase in importance in the Baltic Sea region. Does this mean that the environmental regime in the area is changing? It is a question to which the future will provide an answer, when the roles of HELCOM and Baltic 21 are becoming clearer. However, already the EU legislation seems to have affected the environmental work around the Baltic Sea, according to the interviewees, which could signify changes in the co-operation in the area. The EU is already a strong actor in the Baltic Sea region.

One difference that the stronger role of EU could bring the environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea area, is changes in the possibilities of enforcing upon states to carry out the actions they have undertaken. According to Kennedy et al. (2002), one of the weak points of international regimes is that they often lack provisions on dealing with non-complying countries. To improve compliance with given rules, the legal enforcement instruments would have to be sharpened, which could include both incentives and sanctions (Kennedy et al., 2002). Both HELCOM and Baltic 21 have little possibilities to enforce upon the states to do what they have promised. For example, Hjorth (1992) means that the legal strategy lacks institutions with coercive powers. EU, on the other hand, has greater power to take action towards non-complying countries. When the EU law is practised, the Court of Justice of the European Communities plays an important role. A member state that breaks the EU law could be brought before the Court of Justice by the European Commission or another member state (Riksdagen, 2003). Kennedy et al. (2002) finds it essential that additional and effective enforcement mechanisms be built into the international regimes. If there is a shift towards handling environmental issues within the EU instead of HELCOM and Baltic 21, the enforcement mechanisms could be expected to rise. This could hopefully increase the implementation and the compliance with measures aiming at an improvement of the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea.

5.3 Concluding remarks

This study has shown how the work in agricultural matters is organised within HELCOM and Baltic 21. There has been a Working Group on Agriculture within HELCOM, which has recently finished its work and there is also a forum for land-based pollution in general, the HELCOM LAND. Baltic 21 has a working group for agriculture.
A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the EU is becoming increasingly important as an actor in the Baltic Sea co-operation. This questions the roles of co-operation forms such as HELCOM and Baltic 21. According to the interviewees, it is till uncertain what will happen to the future co-operation within these organisations. The Ministerial Meeting in June 2003 made clear that HELCOM will still serve as a mouthpiece in environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea region. The future role of Baltic 21 will be discussed at a meeting with the environment ministers in August 2003.

The consequences of the work have been difficult to establish, at least from the part of the interviewees. International work is seen as a necessity by the interviewees, and the importance of helping out and sharing experiences is pointed at. The problems arising in the practical work are concerned with cultural differences, as well as more general difficulties of group dynamics and lack of resources. To overcome these problems, some proposals for improving the co-operation are mentioned in the interviews, for instance encouragement, continuity, increased resources, more usage of the projects connected to the HELCOM and Baltic 21 processes etc.

Finally, to improve the environment of the Baltic Sea, co-operation between countries is needed, since these matters are transboundary. Future research in this field should include a perspective covering the entire Baltic Sea region for a wider picture of the co-operation and its conditions. Also, in a few years time when the new members have joined the EU, the conditions should have changed again and new studies would be relevant.
References

Published sources


**Internet sources**


**Interview persons**
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Emmerman, A. Telephone interview on 2003-05-08.
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Appendix 1: Interview manual

The interview manual has been used as a guide and has not been followed strictly. The interview questions were posed to the interviewees in Swedish, but are presented in English in this appendix.

Handling diffuse land-based discharge

1. What are your tasks within HELCOM/Baltic 21?
   For how long have you been working with these issues? Do you have any other tasks apart from these? How much time do the issues within HELCOM/Baltic 21 take in relation to your other work?

2. How do you work within HELCOM/Baltic 21/your working group with issues concerning discharge from agriculture/diffuse land-based discharge?
   What environmental issues/areas do you focus upon? What goals do you have? How do you work to implement these goals? How often does your working group meet? What (countries) are then represented? What do you do in between these meetings?

3. What priority do you believe that issues concerning discharge from agriculture/diffuse land-based discharge have within HELCOM/Baltic 21 as a whole?
   Is this work considered important/is it given enough resources? Do you believe that these issues could need more attention? Why?

Co-operation between countries and organisations

4. How do you think that handling environmental issues through international co-operation works, i.e. to work together with representatives from other countries?
   Have you found a difficulty in the fact that you represent different countries? What difference does it make that (the economical) conditions differ around the Baltic Sea? Does it affect the co-operation? Have you been affected by the plans to enlarge the EU? In what way?

5. Why do you believe that the co-operation between the countries within HELCOM/Baltic 21 is necessary?
   In what way is the co-operation with other countries able to enrich the work in environmental issues? What does it bring that a country alone cannot achieve? (For example, will it help Sweden to reach the 15 national environmental goals?) How do you think that the national and the international/regional work complement one another?

6. What role have you experienced that Sweden has in the co-operation, in relation to other countries?
   How much does Sweden prompt on the work? What is the role of the Swedish EPA within HELCOM/equivalent within Baltic 21?

7. Does HELCOM/Baltic 21 co-operate with other regional organisations in this issue?
   In what way?
8. **What is the HELCOM/Baltic 21 relation to Baltic 21/ HELCOM/CCB?**
   Do you meet regularly? Do you run projects or anything similar together regarding this issue? Do you comment on each other’s work? How do you look upon your role in relation to other organisations? How have you experienced that you influence other organisations?

9. **The realisation and the consequences of the work**

9. **Who is responsible for the Swedish implementation of the goals within HELCOM/Baltic 21? (The Swedish EPA/equivalent?)**
   How is the work progressing?

10. **What do you believe that your work concerning agricultural discharge/diffuse land-based discharge has led to?**
   Have you been able to realise your goals? Can you see any consequences for the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea? Which ones, in that case? In what areas does work remain? Have you experienced that the co-operation in these issues has had consequences for other areas outside of the environmental sector, for example for security issues?

11. **Possibilities for improvements**

11. **Is there anything regarding the co-operation/working methods that you believe has worked particularly well?**

12. **What do you find more problematic about the co-operation?**
   Where in your working methods have you met obstacles?

13. **What do you believe could need to be changed for the co-operation to work (even) better?**

14. **Would you like to add anything?**
   Is there anything that you feel has not been mentioned during the interview?