EUROPEAN MARINE STRATEGY
- SCIENCE MEETS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

In October 2005, the European Commission communicated a Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment and proposed a Marine Strategy Directive. The aim of the European Marine Strategy and the associated Directive is to promote protection and conservation of marine environments in Europe. The Strategy is one of the seven thematic strategies of the EU Sixth Environmental Action Programme (6th EAP) and has been developed to fulfill the requirement of the 6th EAP to ‘promote sustainable use of the seas and conserve the marine ecosystems’. The Strategy and the Directive will be important contributions to future European Union maritime policy and can be considered as the environmental component of the policy.

The ultimate objective of the proposed Directive is to achieve a good environmental state of the European marine environments by the year 2021. This would be accomplished by developing marine strategies for the marine waters of Member States in each of the European marine regions. The Strategy will be implemented by Member States cooperating at the regional sea level (e.g. the Baltic, Mediterranean and North Seas) within the framework of existing regional European sea conventions (e.g. the Baltic Sea Action Plan of HELCOM, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission).

THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IS ESSENTIAL
Marine strategy seeks to address the economic, environmental, social, and governance challenges relating to the oceans and the seas, in a holistic manner. A key element of the Strategy and its Directive is the implementation of the integrated ecosystem approach to management with the aim to achieve good environmental status’. The ecosystem approach is defined as:

‘The comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on the best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health of marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity.’

It is crucial that, for the first time, the Strategy explicitly calls for research to support management actions. The essential issue is that this high-level EU strategic goal, which will be implemented through the environmental sector at national and EU levels, will have its ramifications in the RTD sector. This can be considered as a sectoral breakthrough and will challenge the thinking of all individuals and actors involved both in environmental, fisheries and RTD sectors.

BONUS-169 – A DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMME TO IMPLEMENT THE EUROPEAN MARINE STRATEGY
From its very beginning, the aim of the BONUS ERA-NET has been to ‘form a network and partnership of key agencies funding research with the aim to deepen the understanding of conditions for science-based management of environmental issues in the Baltic Sea’. When this goal was set, there were only a few hints about the emerging Marine Strategy. Today it is obvious that even the initial goal of BONUS perfectly responded to the needs arising from the Marine Strategy. At present, BONUS is developing a Science Plan for the future Joint Baltic Sea research programme, and the linkage to the Marine Strategy is thus even more obvious.

WHY ARTICLE 169?
During the past year, the BONUS countries and the European Commission have been developing a joint Baltic Sea research programme, called BONUS-169, to be implemented under Article 169 of the EC Treaty.

One can question why Article 169 and not other EU funding instruments. Why not the Networks of Excellence or Integrated Projects are other EU funding instruments. Why not the Network of Excellence or Integrated Projects are not considered? Because the Marine Strategy explicitly calls for research and management in order to achieve the best possible scientific knowledge for science-based management of environmental issues in the Baltic Sea. At present, BONUS is developing a Science Plan for the future Joint Baltic Sea research programme, and the linkage to the Marine Strategy is thus even more obvious.

BONUS-169 IS A WAY TO CREATE A COMMON SPACE IN RESEARCH WITH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Research is within one of the four Common European Spaces between Russia and the EU, as outlined by the Moscow Summit Meeting in May 2005. The Community is facing the challenge of developing and applying a more proactive strategy for collaboration between the Russian Federation. This can be reached in research, assessment and management in order to achieve an improved conservation and restoration of the environment and the living resources of the Baltic Sea and to ensure the sustainable development of the region.

The Russian Federation will be an associated member of the Charepph, and its Directive is the implementation of the integrated ecosystem approach to management with the aim to achieve good environmental status’. The ecosystem approach is defined as:

One can question why Article 169 and not other EU funding instruments. Why not the Networks of Excellence or Integrated Projects, for instance?

The specific feature of Article 169 is that it is the only instrument that integrates national and EU research policies. Article 169 is a funding instrument that goes beyond the coordination of national research programmes, through a strategic long-term cooperation rather than an operational strategy for cooperation. It is an instrument where Member States are the driving force, and the commitment by Member States is made at a high level. It is therefore best suited for cooperation that supports existing international conventions and policy instruments.

These features make Article 169 a much more powerful tool for linking science and policy, whereas the Network of Excellence and Integrated Projects are initiated and driven by researchers, not by Member States, and their linkage to existing policies is occasional or weak.

BONUS-169 IS A WAY TO CREATE A COMMON SPACE IN RESEARCH WITH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Kaisa Kononen

Bonus Newsletter April 2006
BONUS ERA-NET IN A NUTSHELL

The ERA-NET Scheme, and the BONUS ERA-NET in particular, have opened up new and challenging visions not only to the research community but also to society at large. In ERA-NETS, research funding organisations can apply for funds from the European Commission for cooperation and for establishing joint research programmes. The ultimate goal is to create a European Research Area, irrespective of the field of research. The actors working towards this goal represent the RTD sector and are under the respective ministries in their national governance structure.

In research fields that are important to society, such as environmental and medical sciences, information technology and research on natural resources, research and in particular the application of research results interest other sectors and ministries, which are dealing with the environment, social affairs, health, transport, food, agriculture and forestry.

Baltic Sea research provides a good example of the challenges created by the ERA-NETS. Better status and the protection of the Baltic Sea have been among the premises of the national ministries of the environment and European Commission DG Environment. Sustainable fisheries have been in the interest of the ministries involved in food production and fisheries as well as of DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. Ensuring the safety of navigation falls into the sector of transport and DG Energy and Transport, and the levels of pollutants in the Baltic Sea fish are vital to public health, and thus among the premises of the ministries of health and DG Health and Consumer Protection.

The Baltic Sea States have at a high political level agreed upon cooperation between several of the sectors mentioned above. The states cooperate with the aim to protect the Baltic Sea, to ensure sustainable fisheries and navigation safety and to decrease environmental risks from navigation. In the RTD sector, i.e. funding and research policy, however, such cooperation has been minor.

The aim of the BONUS ERA-NET is to establish a joint Baltic Sea research programme, which will be funded by the EC, Member States and the Russian Federation. Its goal is to improve our understanding and predictive capacity of the Baltic Sea ecosystem’s response to various drivers and pressures created by human activity (e.g. fisheries, industry, tourism, agriculture, forestry, transport, land/seabed use, urbanisation, water use) and to link research to decision-making.

BONUS implements the EU RTD strategy by creating a European Research Area and national strategies by advancing high-quality research in universities and research institutes. At the same time, the goal is also to produce and synthesise high-standard research results for the use of the management of environmental issues of the Baltic Sea and for the sustainable use of its natural resources.

BONUS will therefore implement the core strategies of the environmental and fisheries sectors. Better knowledge of the physical characteristics of the sea improves predictions and warnings of storms and therefore promotes navigation safety – this ties in with the visions of the transport sector.

BONUS is in the intersection of sectors dealing with Baltic Sea issues. Its challenge is to break through the sectorial borders and to make science, which is funded with tax-payers’ money, to better serve the wellbeing of citizens and to protect our environment. I see this as the crystalization of a vast vision of opportunities created by ERA-NETS.

Kaisa Kononen

BONUS coordination office (from left): Network Secretary Johanna Inkinen, Coordinator Kaisa Kononen and Project Officer Hanna Kannari.
THE BALTIC SEA REGION – A LABORATORY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

Nowadays the world is aware of the necessity of sustainable development. Sustainability does not only mean environment protection but it is also a development of balancing the environmental, social and economic spheres of human life for our present and future well-being. Harmony is equally essential both within and between all these three domains. Due to its very complicated and troubled history, geopolitical location, ethnic and cultural diversity and the particularly sensitive and vulnerable shallow water ecosystem, the Baltic Sea Region provides almost laboratory-type conditions for investigating the problems of sustainable development.

In an attempt to describe the uniqueness of the Baltic Sea Region in the most condensed way I would use the word fragility. The Baltic Sea Region is a fragile area of a very sensitive and fragmented natural, social and economic environment. It is an area where any disturbances appearing in one of the domains trigger an immediate reaction and result in severe consequences in all others.

A very high level of pollution of the Baltic Sea was the result of the political, economic and social fragmentation of the region that was unable to undertake any joint initiative or to develop a common policy protecting the sea. The Cold War period resulted in a lack of identity within the region that was a playground for hostile political forces and interests. During its whole history, the region has been rather an arena for the great powers’ struggle for supremacy than a sea of peace and cooperation. Its peripheral location, in relation to the main European political and economic centres, made the matter even worse.

The region is strongly diversified economically. There is a Northern belt of strong economic activity stretching from Hamburg to Helsinki. The South is less developed; however, it has great potential of social capital and is intensively restructuring its post-communist economies. The vibrant, metropolitan regions neighbour numerous peripheral rural areas.

From the ethnic, linguistic and cultural point of view the Baltic Sea Region is a real melting pot. The Nordic, Germanic, Finno-Ugric and Slavic worlds meet around the same sea bringing Western, Eastern and Northern Europe together. Different identities, different histories as well as different cultural codes do not make integration and cooperation an easy task in this part of Europe.

In the discussed context of the social and economic fragmentation, some questions appear: Is effective cooperation possible in the Baltic Sea Region? Are the efforts to create a coherent space of the riparian countries reasonable?

With the enlargement of the EU, a new political, administrative, economic and cultural reality was created in this region. The Baltic Sea has become an interior sea of the European Union but is still a border sea with non-EU Russia. Its geopolitical meaning has changed more than of that any other European region. It seems that, finally, history provides a chance to our part of the continent. The high level of heterogeneity of the region makes cooperation much harder but also more profitable. The potential stemming from the division of labour, from different cultures, different national traditions and specialisations, raises the level of creativity and innovation critical to successful development in the global economy.

The challenges the Baltic Sea Region faces need initiatives to mobilise the broad international and interdisciplinary forces. The new formula of Article 169 funding scheme opens up the opportunity of a scale and range adequate to these challenges. The problems discussed make it clear that a Baltic Sea research programme investigating the natural environment issues cannot avoid the questions of social and economic integration. Dealing only with environmental matters, we will be far from sustainable development goals.

The broad involvement of social science is necessary in order to trace, explain and solve the problems of environmental deterioration of the region.

The mobilisation of the potential of social scientists will help to bring the strengths and opportunities hidden in the region to a broader public debate. The role of education cannot be forgotten. Thus creating the ‘social production’ power for the development of the Baltic Sea Region will open limitless perspectives for its future success.

Iwona Sagan, University of Gdańsk, Department of Economic Geography Member of BONUS Advisory Board

BONUS interviewed people around the Baltic Sea asking their opinion on the sea and its future. Answers show that people in the different coastal countries think alike: Oil tankers and contamination are seen as the main threats. However, it was more difficult for the interviewed to name opportunities, for example, tourism, development and fishing divided opinions. In general, people called for stronger actions and cooperation to save the sea.

Tarja Sjöberg, Helsinki, Finland
Cleanliness should be objective. Now the sea is in bad shape. Wartime waste is still a problem. The biggest threat is Russian oil transportation. Tankers should be punished for spilling oil or other waste into the sea and the penalties should be high enough.

Kari Suominen, Helsinki, Finland
The small size of the sea is a bad thing. If we continue as before, the future doesn’t look good. At least ship traffic should be cut down. I fish every year until the sea freezes. But the cause of more algae, fishnets get dirtier every year and the growth of the seal population means broken nets.

Toniis, Tallinn, Estonia
Trade and transit are the main opportunities, like the Hanseatic League in the past. History can repeat itself. The main threat is that the Baltic Sea would be one of the most polluted seas. There have been a lot of discussions, but no real actions, to avoid it. It definitely will happen if future governments will not take any serious actions.

Marika Tallinn, Estonia
I hope everything goes well, thanks to international cooperation. The main threat is the pollution caused by oil transit and from the planned Russian-German gas pipe.

Dace Strautmane, Riga, Latvia
Tourism and fishery are opportunities. Oil spills, untreated wastewater, ships, piracy, fish diseases are threats.

Yvonne Kannebäck, Stockholm, Sweden
Large oil tanker traffic is a problem, as are the outlets from land, mostly from Poland and up to Russia. I’m positive about the cod’s future; it will come back and grow in the Baltic.

Erik Ljunggren, Stockholm, Sweden
Outlets pose a great threat to the sea. I’m also worried about the great outbreak of fish. I’m rather pessimistic about the future. Politicians around the Baltic should take responsibility and set harder restrictions on the fishing.

Lotta Molander, Stockholm, Sweden
I’m worried about the outlets of nutrients and the eutrophication around the whole Baltic. With recreation there’s a problem such as bathing. I don’t see any positive sides at the moment. What can we, as a community, do to improve the condition of the Baltic Sea?

Tilla Bergmane, Riga, Latvia
Development in tourism and recreation fields could be the greatest future opportunity for the sea. Uncontrolled pollution, especially from countries difficult to control and influence, is the greatest threat.

Andrejs Breidiks, Riga, Latvia
Better marine transport connections, tourism and maybe potentially finding oil and using it are the main opportunities.
MarinERA has adopted a pro-active role within the European marine science landscape by catalysing information and know-how exchange between marine related ERA-NETS, Networks of Excellence (NoEs) and, more recently, the ESF-EUROCORES scheme.

In December 2005, the MarinERA Secretariat launched the first MarinERA Forum, gathering coordinators of marine-environmental ERA-NETS and EC representatives. The aim of the Forum is to enable ERA-NET coordinators to meet on a regular basis and to exchange information of mutual interest such as best practices and standardisation in information sharing (questionnaires), common development of databases, methods of cooperation with the NoEs, interaction-connection with EU initiatives, common strategic activities and implementation procedures, etc.

The second MarinERA Forum (March 2006) focused on practices and experiences from several ERA-NETS and EUROCORES including technical features such as preparation of joint calls, funding, timeline, coordination and integration of teams. One of the key points of this meeting revealed that this interaction facilitates fine tuning of schemes by listening to and learning from each other including extracting principles of best practices from existing test cases and pilot experiences, improving links with research community, finding a way to mutualise means and tools.

The Forum highlighted once more the diversity of funding programmes within the research landscape in Europe and the benefit of having a platform facilitating harmonisation of procedures (minimum set of transparent conditions, basic requirements/essential prerequisites) specifically when schemes are mainly addressed by the same funding agencies.

MarinERA is also consolidating its interaction with the NoEs (MarinERA’s observers), particularly in fields of common interests such as the infrastructure component, which addresses the needs of the research community. Therefore, experts from NoEs will be invited to specific MarinERA workshops dealing with technical and database platforms.

In addition to its operational goal, MarinERA also aims to impact on European policies of interest for marine sciences.

Aurelien Carbonnière
MarinERA
Marine Board Secretariat, Strasbourg

### Number of marine environment ERA-NETS in which countries participate.

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### Number of participating organisations per country in the marine environment ERA-NETS.

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**ESF - European Science Foundation, ICES - International Council for the Exploration of the Sea**

Bonus Newsletter April 2006
**BiodiversA**

**Research Network for Understanding of European and Overseas Biodiversity**

**Duration:** 2005–2009

**Budget:** 2.8 M€

**Coordination:** Institut Français de la Biodiversité, IFB, France

**Objectives:**

- Collate activities and seek best practice as a basis for cooperation in the field of biodiversity research funding;
- Increase interaction and synergy, reduce duplication and fragmentation, and create a critical mass for biodiversity research in Europe;
- Build a platform for sustained co-operation between funding agencies;
- Promote research on European biodiversity taken as a whole (including marine biodiversity); and
- Contribute to policy making and priorities setting in biodiversity research.

Webpage: [www.eurobiodiversa.org](http://www.eurobiodiversa.org)

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**CIRCLE**

**Climate Impact Research Co-ordination within a Larger Europe**

**Duration:** 2005–2009

**Budget:** 3.0 M€

**Coordination:** Federal Environment Agency, Austria

**Objectives:**

- Foster European cross-border cooperation regarding national research activities and taking a crucial look on the topic of socio-economic developments from climate change impacts;
- Initiate enhanced cooperation of national programmes on climate change impacts within the EU;
- Provide a platform for cooperation activities among programmes, establish a sound knowledge base on national activities and prepare the base for a multi-national network of research programmes throughout Europe; and
- Create a strong network of European research programmes in this field with multi-national joint calls and strong cooperation with the FP7.

Webpage: [www.unmweltbundesamt.at/klima/projekte/circle](http://www.unmweltbundesamt.at/klima/projekte/circle)

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**EuroPOLAR**

**Strategic Coordination and Structuring of European Polar RTD Programmes and Infrastructures**

**Duration:** 2005–2009

**Budget:** 2.5 M€

**Coordination:** Institut Polariques Français Paul Emile Victor, IPV and European Science Foundation, ESF, France

**Objectives:**

- Deepen and strengthen the interactions between countries with large Polar RTD Programmes and nations with evolving Polar Programmes in Central and South Eastern Europe;
- Encourage and support the closer relationship of National Polar RTD programme managers from Europe and the Russian Federation, fostering cooperation and leading to joint programme activities;
- Open up a vast network of human and material capital;
- Enable the construction of mechanisms to mobilise joint funding flows and the reciprocal access to Polar Research Infrastructures; and
- Develop a ‘European Polar Entity’ that will be established through dialogue at a political level beyond the EUROPOLAR ERA-NET and will enable Europe to maximise and direct its critical mass at the global level.

Webpage: [www.europolar.org](http://www.europolar.org)

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**ECORD-NET**

**European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling**

**Duration:** 2003–2007

**Budget:** 2.2 M€

**Coordination:** Centre National de Recherche Scientifique/INSU, France

**Objectives:**

- Establish best practice in Europe and internationally in mutual exchange of information. Create an accessible and highly visible database to permit European scientists to efficiently exploit all aspects of scientific ocean drilling and managers to evaluate the impact of ocean drilling related science;
- Ensure best practice for subcontracting of pooled national funding: Develop the tools for the ECORD Managing Agency to become an open European structure for the financial, legal and management Research and Development (IPD);
- Establish and test best practice for implementation of complex scientific programmes: Develop best practice for sub-contracting, balancing of European and international involvement in IPD drilling operations using mission specific platforms, ensure equitable availability of core samples, incorporate third party platforms, ensure equitable availability of core samples, incorporate third party scientific interests in IPD activities in national waters; and
- Achieve mutualisation of European science programmes: Establish strategies for proposal preparation, efficient scientific staffing, and effective pre- and post-cruise funding and coordination of European science programmes in IOCP;
- Addendum funded in 2006 for enlargement to include the mutualisation of objectives of ECORD with three broad areas of the science of the deep sea floor “The Deep Sea Floor Frontier” involving IMAGES (International Marine Past Global Changes Study), HERMES (Hotspot Ecosystem Research on the Margins of European Seas), EuroMARGINS (EF/EUROCORES), and ESO-Net (The European Seafloor Observation Network).

Webpage: [www.ecord.org/enet/ecord-net.html](http://www.ecord.org/enet/ecord-net.html)

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**CRUE**

**Integrate, Consolidate and Disseminate European Flood Risk Management Research**

**Duration:** 2004–2008

**Budget:** 3.0 M€

**Coordination:** Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), United Kingdom

**Objectives:**

- Develop strategic integration of flood risk research at the national funding and policy development level within Europe to provide knowledge and understanding for the sustainable management of flooding risks at the river basin and coastal process cell scale;
- Support the implementation of national and European policies on flood risk management;
- Identify priority research issues;
- Institutional infrastructure for a more efficient use of resources on flood research in the ERA;
- Link and support the integration process; and
- Develop integrated flood management for trans-national river basins.

Webpage: [www.crue-eranet.net](http://www.crue-eranet.net)
MAJOR RUSSIAN CONSULTATIONS ON BONUS-169 BALTIC SEA SCIENCE PLAN

On 31 January 2006, the meeting on Russian Consultations on Developing the Baltic Sea Science Plan was held at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ZIN RAS) in St Petersburg. The consultation was the last one in a series of consultations arranged in the Baltic Sea states. The aim of the Consultations was to bring together a critical mass of scientists and administrators from relevant Russian institutions and scientific disciplines in order to better acquaint themselves with the current BONUS ERA-NET project, and to provide Russian views and critique about the scope and substance of the anticipated future joint international Baltic Sea Project, BONUS-169, due to run from 2008 – 2012.

CONSULTATION WAS ORGANIZED JOINTLY

The preparations for the meeting were jointly developed by BONUS, with the assistance of the Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), working closely with the Russian hosts and organizers: Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences (ZIN RAS), Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), and Russian Hydrobiological Society (RHS).

The plenum sessions of the Consultations were opened on Tuesday 31 January 2006, by Academician, Professor Alexander F. Alimov (Director of ZIN RAS). He welcomed the foreign guests Drs Kononen, Thulin, Hopkins and Andrushnits and noted the impressively engaged response to the invitation by the Russian scientific community. He described briefly the history of the Baltic Sea investigations in Russia. Further he emphasized the importance placed by the Russian scientific community on collaboration within BONUS to increase knowledge about the Baltic Sea ecosystem, including understanding how natural and human-induced changes affect the Baltic Sea ecosystem as well as developing scientifically based mitigation measures to effectively address the environmental problems.

Dr Kaisa Kononen, the BONUS Programme Manager, provided an overview of the aims and developments in BONUS ERA-NET and BONUS-169, emphasizing the importance of the Russian Federation, together with the eight European Community States, for achieving a successful collaboration and outcomes in the future BONUS-169 joint Baltic Sea Research Programme.

Dr Valery D. Smirnov, RFBR, drew attention to the RFBR activities and its interdisciplinary research. He explained peculiarities of funding mechanisms under umbrella of RFBR. He also presented some main perspectives of the forthcoming co-operation with scientists from the Russian Federation.

BONUS-169 SCIENCE PLAN COUPLES ‘TOP-DOWN’ AND ‘BOTTOM-UP’ APPROACHES

Professor Chris Hopkins, ICES Co-Task Leader with Jan Thulin of the BONUS ERA-NET Task 2.5 ‘Potential Future Transnational Research Schemes’, outlined the process for developing the BONUS-169 Science Plan, as mandated by the Executive Committee of BONUS.

The Baltic Sea Science Plan Framework (SPF) document, which he had produced in August 2005, had been made available to the wider Baltic Sea science community via the BONUS and ICES websites with a view to promoting feedback and critique including issues and topics for prioritization. The SPF document functioned to convert the research needs arising from the management bodies into scientific questions, which the scientific community can respond to with research ideas. It was already agreed that BONUS-169 would focus on developing scientific outputs and knowledge to support and enhance the transnational ecosystem-based management of the Baltic Sea. He emphasized that when developing a science plan for the future, it is extremely important for the success of the plan that ‘top-down’ planning (e.g. environmental problem-oriented and ‘bottom-up’ input (e.g. question-driven priorities of scientists and research organizations) are effectively coupled. As the completed Science Plan must form the basis for Calls for research proposals to be funded by BONUS-169, the Plan must mobilize a ‘critical mass’ of the science community by being inclusive rather than exclusive, being credible and relatable to the appropriate clusters (e.g. disciplines) of the science community and potential ‘users’. The outputs must be considered as ‘Living documents’, i.e. they are open for improvement until a final deadline is decided.

Finally, Professor Hopkins informed that consultations like this now had been arranged in all nine Baltic Sea States to provide views and feedback on the SPF. A Questionnaire had been developed for this purpose. Responses from the national consultations/workshops are of great value in forming an essential mechanism for providing organized feedback to further develop the scope and substance of the Science Plan. This approach facilitated properly ‘marrying’ (e.g. balance) the top-down and bottom-up aspects of the Science Plan. Work was ongoing, in parallel with feedback from the consultation process, to develop informative text-boxes for each of the eight themes underpinning the Science Plan. It is envisaged that the completed BONUS-169 Science Plan will in due course be a relatively short document comprising: a) a Preamble and Introduction; b) the Programme Objectives and Funding Policy; c) the text-boxes for the eight themes that will form the basis for Calls for submissions of project proposals for funding; and d) Annexes that will inter alia form Policy and Background sections.

MAJOR RUSSIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS PRESENT

After questions and clarification connected with the above presentations, sixty-seven registered participants introduced themselves from the following Russian institutions:

ST PETERSBURG
- Government of St Petersburg
- Russian Academy of Sciences: Botanical Institute
- Zoological Institute
- Institutes of Limnology
- State Institute of Oceanology - St Petersburg Scientific Center
- Ecology@Business
- State Research Institute on Lake and River Fisheries (GolNDRKH)
- Ichthyological Commission
- Nansen International Center
- State Company Samarmorgo
- St Petersburg State University
- State Hydrometeorology University
- All-Russian Research Geological Institute (VSEGEI)

KALININGRAD
- Atlantic Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (AldbRIO)
- Immunol. Krol State University
- Russian Academy of Sciences: State Institute of Oceanology, Baltiic Branch

MOSCOW
- Russian Academy of Sciences: State Institute of Oceanology
- State Oceanographic Institute
- Russian Foundation for Basic Research
- All-Russian Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (VNIRO)

PETROZAVODSK
- Russian Academy of Sciences: Vahtor-Water Problems Institute

The backgrounds of the participants covered an extraordinarily wide range of scientific and managerial expertise, including sedimentologists/geologists and geochemists; physical, chemical and biological oceanographers; biochemists and physiologists; zoologists, botanists, biodiversity orientated hydrobiologists, fish biologists and fisheries experts; eutrophication and production experts, remote sensing experts; modellers and system orientated scientists.

The participants were allocated to work in six individual working groups to develop Russian views regarding the potential scope and issues to be addressed by the eight themes of the Plan. Many of the participants had prepared in advance for the Consultations by filling in and returning the circulated Questionnaire.

After about three hours of working group deliberations, the Chairs or Rapporteurs of each working group (WG1: Dr Vladimir Rybachenko, State Institute of Oceanology of RAS; WG2: Dr Sergey Golubkov, ZIN RAS; WG3: Dr Leonid Kuderskiy, Institute of Limnology of RAS; WG4: Dr Marina Orlina, ZIN RAS; WG5: Dr Oleg Pugachev, ZIN RAS; WG6 and WP1: Dr Aleksey Nekraev, State Hydrological University, St Petersburg) reported back in plenum, using about 15 minutes per group, by summarizing the conclusions of the groups. Opportunities were actively used for comments and clarification from the floor. The Chairs will follow up their presentations by providing written reports on their conclusions in due course.

In concluding the Consultations in plenum, Professors Alimov and Thulin, on behalf of the Russian organizers and ICES/BSRP/BONUS, acknowledged the very friendly and effective collaboration. An official Russian Consultations report will be prepared including the report and its proposals will be given considerable attention in further developing the draft BONUS-169 Science Plan. The Consultations already have made another important notable achievement by bringing together a large number of eminent Russian scientific and managerial representatives who rarely, if at all, were able to meet together previously to cooperatively focus on strategically important issues regarding the Baltic Sea. This is an early and very positive outcome of the BONUS-related collaboration, and will be followed up in Russia by the proposed establishment of a Russian BONUS Forum that will be expanded to include various Ministries and specialized Agencies.

Additional information about the Russian consultations can be found at the web-site:www.zin.ru/projects/baltdiv/bonus169.html

Chris Hopkins, Jan Thulin, Alexander Alimov and Nick Aladin
Researchers involved in the Finnish Baltic Sea Research Programme (BIREME) have been very successful in disseminating the results of their work, and in attracting the attention of the general public throughout the duration of the programme. As the BIREME programme is gradually coming to an end, 2006 is the year for summing up and for making extra effort in communicating the results achieved also outside the science community.

The BIREME seminar “What is going to happen to the Baltic Sea: The diagnosis by the researchers” was organised for this purpose. The aim was to give an overview of the latest results of Baltic Sea research to decision makers, administration experts, end-users, civic organisations and the media. The seminar was organised on invitation by President of the Academy of Finland, Professor Raimo Väyrynen, together with Minister of the Environment, Mr Jan-Erik Enestam. We also had the privilege of having Minister Enestam to chair the event. The seminar took place in the Parliament auditorium in Helsinki on 14 February 2006.

Dr Anneli Pauli, Vice President (Research), addressed the seminar on behalf of the Academy of Finland. She called attention to the utmost importance of multi- and interdisciplinary research as a basis to gain key knowledge needed for environmental protection actions.

The seminar was no one-man show. It was a joint effort of all the projects taking part in BIREME. The researchers chose three messengers from among themselves to present the overview of the chosen topics. Professor Erkki Leppäkoski talked about biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, reminding us all of the fact that change is the only constant. Professor Harri Kuosa’s presentation on eutrophication covered the effects of the events in the drainage basin, in the coastal zone, in the archipelago and in the sediment on excess nutrient loads. Reduction in eutrophication will not be immediate; however, actions, such as reducing nutrient loads, need to be taken, and the work should start from home. Professor Martin Romantschuk discussed toxins in the Baltic Sea, presenting case studies on two very topical areas, dioxins and PCBs in fish and oil spills.

Representatives of stakeholders had been invited to comment on presentations, and a European dimension to the discussion was provided by a member of the European Parliament. Before the closing comments by Minister Enestam, Chair of the BIREME Steering Group, Professor Juha Kämäri, briefly summarised the outcome of the event.

The seminar was well received: it was attended by more than 100 participants, and also by quite a few representatives from the media. After the two-hour seminar, over coffee, participants had an opportunity to interview and discuss with the BIREME project leaders. For me, as BIREME Programme Manager, it was a sheer joy to witness how active and vivid the communication was; the media and stakeholders searched and found the source of information they were looking for.

Having a hunch, I made sure I was at home by the 7 o’clock news that night. And sure enough, interviews from the seminar were broadcasted. In the morning I felt like a member of a cast after the premiere, and was not disappointed: the BIREME seminar with its themes was given good coverage in all major and also in many smaller newspapers. Also the fruitful discussions researchers had with the media are expected to lead to more in-depth popular articles on the Baltic Sea research in the near future. A successful event, such as this, reminds me of how privileged I am to have this job — to work with researchers who are fully committed to work together for the good of the Baltic Sea.

Tuula Aarnio

BONUS Network Steering Committee (NSC) is the highest decision-making body in BONUS. It consists of BONUS partner representatives. NSC members represent decision-making in their own organisations.

Network Steering Committee has various tasks. NSC agrees on strategic activities, plans and implementation of BONUS tasks. It approves task reports and results as well as approaches related to the different BONUS activities. NSC prepares the basis for the sustainable cooperation between the BONUS partners.

The first two years of BONUS have shown that NSC is not a ‘rubber stamp’. It is an active — and pro-active — player, which commits itself on and, if needed, propose changes to BONUS activities, task reports and results.

NSC meets normally twice a year. Advanced and accelerated preparation of the joint Baltic Sea Research Programme, BONUS-169, has also compressed the meeting time schedule of the Network Steering Committee. It has three meetings already during the first half of the year 2006.

The last meetings have underlined the important role of NSC. It has made decisions on the dedicated structure planned for the joint research programme. After comparison of different administrative structure possibilities, NSC saw the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) as the most appropriate structure for implementing BONUS-169. In its Riga meeting in March 2006, NSC decided the name and location of the coming EEIG. BONUS – Baltic Organisations’ Network for Funding Science will be based in Helsinki, Finland.

In addition to the dedicated structure, other important issue on NSC’s agenda has been the common pot and funding distribution in the future joint programme.

These crucial issues have shown, how important the cooperation between NSC and active BONUS tasks and their leaders is. NSC has to be informed about the progress of the tasks. In addition, the crossroads in task implementation need often decisions taken by NSC.

While the NSC agenda has included difficult issues, cooperation of NSC members and their good team spirit have helped to solve also tricky issues. No voting has taken place, the decisions have been based on consensus.

Johanna Inkinen

BONUS Newsletter April 2006
BALTIC SEA AND EUROPEAN MARINE STRATEGY – LINKING SCIENCE AND POLICY CONFERENCE IN HELSINKI, FINLAND, 13–15 NOVEMBER, 2006

Background

- The European Commission has proposed a strategy to protect Europe's marine environment. It is also preparing a Green Paper on all-embracing Maritime Policy, which seeks to address the economic, environmental, social, and governance challenges relating to the oceans and the seas, in a holistic manner. The Commission's policy framework lays down operational guidelines on how to achieve a good environmental status for the entire marine area of the EU. The Baltic Sea is one of the marine regions, in which the common objectives and methodologies must be implemented through the development of action plans.

Scope

This conference demonstrates how research can support the protection and management of the marine environment.

It addresses the Baltic Sea in terms of research, protection, environmental awareness, education, and international cooperation. It is targeted at decision makers, politicians, managers, media and educators as well as natural, economic, engineering and social scientists studying the Baltic Sea. The invitation covers influential in the Baltic region and other European regional sea basins in EU Member States and Russia as well as national, regional and international organisations involved in the protection of the regional seas.

Venue

The conference will be held at the Marina Congress Center, Helsinki, Finland, on November 13–15, 2006.

Further information and registration

www.eu2006balticsea.net

SCIENTIFIC AND OPERATIONAL COLLABORATION IN OIL SPILL COMBATING - RECENT EXPERIENCES IN ESTONIA

- Two accidental oil spills occurred in the Gulf of Finland in early 2006. The first spill in January was detected after the oil pollution hit the shore. Posterior inspection of the SAR images did not reveal oil slicks that could be related to the accident. Spilled heavy fuel oil submerged occasionally due to low water temperature, which complicated the oil spill detection by remote sensing methods. The stranded oil was collected on shore. Scientists from the Marine Systems Institute, Tallinn University of Technology, ran oil drift model Seatrack-Web for the backtracking of the oil drift to potential polluters. The model was developed at the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) and the Royal Danish Administration of Navigation and Hydrography (RDANH) and is currently maintained at SMHI.

On 5 March 2006, a ship sank after a collision in the eastern Gulf of Finland. Initially, a marginal oil spill was detected at the location. Immediate model predictions by Seatrack-Web showed that during the first days after the accident the oil drift was marginal, which was confirmed by monitoring. However, following predictions indicated that the core of the oil slick was drifting west-southwest under the ice cover. Because of severe ice conditions there were no confirmations from observations that model predictions could be accurate. After one week, the oil pollution was detected about 25 NM southwest of the wreck location during the monitoring flight by LIDAR, which gave increased reliability for the model results. The model predictions indicated that the oil slick was drifting further west-southwest, and on 16 March a warning that drifting oil will reach the nearby area of Tallinn Bay by 17 March was issued. The oil combating vessels were put on alert in Tallinn Bay and the actual oil combating started on 17 March. Because of the ice conditions and the fact that the oil was dispersed into small slicks, the oil combating was not very effective. Still, about ten tons of spilled oil was recovered from the Gulf of Finland by the combined efforts of Finnish and Estonian oil combating vessels.

Urmas Raudsepp
Marine Systems Institute
Tallinn University of Technology