

Statement of Baltic Green Network

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY REFORM

The Baltic Green Network has discussed the opportunities and issues around co-operation between green political parties and non-governmental organisations. While the political parties can initiate new legislation and have a good access to high level debates on the proposed bills, NGOs can help the parties with lobbying and public awareness raising. Often NGOs can bring expertise on new international policies and can inform the debate with their knowledge.

The areas for better cooperation in the Baltic Sea covered at the regional fringe meeting in Tallinn on October 8, 2010 included: *Information and knowledge sharing, Local sustainable development projects (to be included in the Green WIKI), Nuclear energy developments in the Baltic Sea area, the EU maritime strategy **and the Common Fisheries Policy reform.***

What do greens want ?

The reproductive capacity of European fish species is threatened by overfishing, currently 72% of stocks are overfished. Despite this, in the past the fishing quotas Member States allocate to themselves in the European Council has exceeded the scientific recommendations provided by ICES by on average 48%.¹

The previous reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in 2002 was able to introduce some improvements: stronger conservation measures, long-term fishing management plans and a longer-term perspective on stock management, more sustainable use of subsidies and increased stakeholder participation through Regional Advisory Councils. In the implementation of the 2002 reform, progress on conservation issues has been slow and ecosystem-based management has yet not been made operational. The previous reform also completely failed to deal with the overwhelming fleet overcapacity in the EU. Thus the overfishing of stocks and the existence of too many big fishing vessels using destructive fishing gear continues.

In April 2009 the European Commission launched a public consultation on the Common Fisheries Policy reform, publishing its Green Paper and asking for the opinions of stakeholders. A wide range of responses from Member States were received, and Sweden, Estonia and the UK had very similar policy positions to the international green community. The Netherlands, Germany and Poland also made some positive statements.

The network calls on NGOs and European Green parties to lobby their relevant ministers and fisheries departments in charge of the negotiations on the CFP; that the following five principles be included in the final version of the new CFP, to be adopted in 2012.

1. Prioritising environmental objectives as a prerequisite to fulfilling social and economic objectives. An **Ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management that respects the precautionary principle must form the basis on which fisheries management is built.

¹ Communication from the Commission - Consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2011, COM/2010/0241 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:DKEY=515932:EN:NOT>

2. **Subsidiarity** of decision-making – The European Council and Parliament should focus on long-term strategic and operational management decisions, with technical decisions being made at a more local and regional level.

3. **Fair access** to fish resources: - Within and outside EU waters, the right to fish should be based upon environmental and social criteria. These should favour less destructive fishing gears and practices, compliance with the law, low fuel consumption and pollution, healthy working conditions and high quality products.

4. **Subsidies** that sustain overcapacity should be phased out. Subsidies and other financial instruments should only be used in a way that serves the public good and supports the transition to environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries.

5. **Overcapacity** of the EU fleet needs to be addressed, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, in order to deliver sustainable fisheries. Legally-binding targets with time restrictions should be implemented to create capacity limits per fishery.

We hereby invite the political parties and NGO networks from other regions to lobby for the same principles too. The EGP Council Meeting could serve as an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and creating new synergies for achieving a green result and a Green New Deal for EU level policies, such as the CFP.