

CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE
ENVIRONMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA AREA

HELSINKI COMMISSION - Baltic Marine HELCOM 16/17
Environment Protection Commission Annex 6

16th Meeting
Helsinki, 14-17 March 1995

HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 16/3

Adopted 15 March 1995, having regard
to Article 13, Paragraph b)
of the Helsinki Convention

PRESERVATION OF NATURAL COASTAL DYNAMICS

THE COMMISSION,

RECALLING Article 13 g of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea, 1974 Helsinki Convention,

NOTING Article 15 of the 1992 Helsinki Convention and the recommendation concerning the protection of the coastal strip (HELCOM 15/1), particularly: "that in this protected coastal strip, activities which would permanently change the nature and landscape,"... "not be allowed, except when proved overwhelmingly in the public interest..."; "that a zone of at least 3 kilometres landward from the mean water line be established as a coastal planning zone...",

NOTING ALSO that conflicts exist between the goals of coastal defence¹⁾ and the goals of nature conservation and that coastal defence measures often lead to, e.g.:

- disturbances of natural ecosystem processes and biotope structures of beaches, dunes, cliffs and the near shore zone by partial or complete modification of local and regional morphodynamics,
- continuous loss of characteristic marine influenced ecosystems, such as episodic flooded coastal and riverine wetlands, coastal wet-forests or active cliffs,
- an increasing threat for the biodiversity of coastal areas,

RECOGNIZING that the typical flora and fauna of coastal areas is highly specialized and is dependent on characteristic coastal habitats and the preservation of natural coastal dynamics,

RECOGNIZING ALSO that natural coastal areas that are subject to episodic flooding (especially wetlands) contribute to the self-cleaning capacity of coastal and lagoon waters,

¹⁾ Definition: "Coastal defence" (so called coastal protection) means all artificial or man induced structures along the coast, such as groins, jetties, sea walls, dykes. It means also infringements on natural beach or dune dynamics and beach or dune replenishment, (i.e., measures which aim to protect the coastal zone against flooding, damages by waves and erosion).

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that a natural coast line is of outstanding beauty and that coastal defence measures reduce the value of the coast for environment friendly tourism,

BEING AWARE that coastal defence measures are very expensive and might cause a lot of follow up costs,

BEING ALSO AWARE that coastal defence measures are necessary in areas where sea currents, waves or high water levels caused by storms may threaten settlements, human life, high economical values or might destroy the cultural heritage,

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

a) that the dynamic character and permanent change of the coast should be recognized and accepted as a natural process and that new coastal defence measures outside settlements normally not be executed except when integrated coastal zone management plans provide otherwise;

b) that active cliffs as sediment supplier and natural coastal flood areas as potential nutrient traps should not be subject to any new coastal defence measures except when integrated coastal zone management plans provide otherwise;

c) that coastal areas outside settlements that have been subject to episodal flooding before they were dyked for land use purposes only, should be restored as coastal wetlands through removal or relocation of dykes further inland, wherever possible;

d) that if coastal defence measures are necessary, natural materials such as stones, sand, soil or wood shall be preferred to artificial materials (concrete, asphalt or plastic),

RECOMMENDS ALSO that coastal defence measures be nationally or regionally incorporated into integrated coastal zone management plans. Such plans should:

-be based on detailed knowledge of the significant physical parameters of coastal morphodynamics,

-consider the mutual relationship between physiographic, ecological and economical parameters,

-integrate these parameters into specific coastal development strategies,

-include an environmental impact assessment,

-include cost-benefit analysis of planned activities,

-be founded on suitable administrative and legal structures,

RECOMMENDS FURTHER that the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Commission should inform HELCOM about new projects and master plans for coastal defence measures.