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Baltic Cities

Environmental Bulletin

Estonia - Environmental Partner for the Baltic Sea Countries



Together with other countries of the world, Estonia has chosen the road of sustainable development. In a situation where both economy and technology are in the developing stages, implementation of environmental policy based on sustainable use of the environment and natural resources requires serious efforts and the efficient use of financial means. At this point the list of international environmental agreements concluded since 1991 includes 31 items, and Estonia has acceded to 17 environmental conventions. We have therefore brought ourselves into consciousness on the "World & European Environmental Map" and, at the same time, committed ourselves to the obligations.

Traditionally, one of the priorities of environmental protection in Estonia has been the protection of waters, including the waters of the Baltic Sea. For years, Estonia has actively participated in environmental projects for the Baltic Sea countries and concluded international agreements to protect the Baltic Sea and the coastal areas.

One of the most polluted parts of the Baltic Sea is the Gulf of Finland. Despite the approx. 20% reduction of pollution load during the last 10 years, water management plans and projects will be of decisive importance in the coming years as well. Although only about 12-14% of the pollution load of the Gulf of Finland originates from Estonia, reduction of this load has been included in the water management plans and projects of our coastal towns.

During the last few years, we have been able to establish important waste water purification facilities in Tallinn and other major cities, where, resultedly, the quality of treated water meets the HELCOM requirements. As the majority of pollutants and nutrients reach the sea via point sources, the reconstruction of waste water treatment facilities in coastal towns has to be continued. According to the valid norms, by 2005 Estonia shall have to biologically treat at least the waste waters of settlements of more than two thousand inhabitants. This means serious efforts shall have to be undertaken in a number of towns.

Until now, grants from our neighbouring countries have been of significant help, because loan projects have been launched only in the recent years. If the objective of Estonia is to accede to the EU by 2010, environmental investments both on the national and local level shall have to be increased. Thus, we are facing a period which will not be easy both from the technical and economic point of view. Finances have to be found for improved management of environmental protection and for meeting international requirements.

Villu Reiljan

Minister of the Environment