



Five Years of Regional Progress Towards Sustainable Development

A Baltic 21 Report to the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea States

In June 1998, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs from the Baltic Sea Region adopted "An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21." The Agenda stipulates, *inter alia*, that the Baltic 21 steering group, the Senior Officials Group (SOG) "should adopt a report to the Prime Ministers approximately every 5th year for consideration and for decision on any changes or additional action needed. Those reports should include a review of the progress of fulfilling the set-up goals and the implementation of the action programme..."

This Baltic 21 five-year report was developed by Alan AtKisson of AtKisson Europe AB in cooperation with the Baltic 21 Secretariat at the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat. It is based on two comprehensive periodic assessments (read more on the back cover), the outcome of the work of an *ad hoc* Baltic 21 Working Group on Policy and Strategy as well as input from the Baltic 21 Sectors and Spatial Planning. It has been negotiated and approved by the Baltic 21 SOG for submission to the Heads of Government of the Baltic Sea States who will be meeting at the 5th Baltic Sea States Summit in Laulasmaa, Estonia, on 21 June 2004.

Complementing this report is a proposed new Baltic 21 mandate, which has also been adopted by the Baltic 21 SOG for submission to the 5th Baltic Sea States Summit in Laulasmaa, Estonia.

Complete information about Baltic 21 is available on the Baltic 21 website at www.baltic21.org, and on a CD-ROM that can be ordered from the Baltic 21 Secretariat.

Further information on where you can order a free copy of this report and other Baltic 21 Series publications is available at:

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Summary

The Baltic Sea Region was the first multi-country region in the world to adopt common goals and actions for sustainable development. The vehicle for that cooperation is Baltic 21, formally “An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region,” a multi-stakeholder process linking government, industry, finance and civil sector actors, together with the European Commission, around a specific program of action.

Established in 1998, building on an agreement struck by the eleven Prime Ministers of the Region in 1996, Baltic 21 is a regional expression of the global commitment to a sustainable future first articulated at the 1992 United Nations “Earth Summit,” and reconfirmed in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

This report reviews regional progress on sustainable development generally, and the achievements of the first five years of the Baltic 21 process specifically, in preparation for a Prime Ministerial decision on the renewal of the Baltic 21 mandate. Included here is a brief summary of actions taken in each of the eight Sectors and seven cross-sectoral Joint Action areas defined in the foundation document of 1998, as well as an overall assessment of the successes and challenges experienced by Baltic 21 as a whole.

This report demonstrates that progress on sustainable development has been made throughout the region, and that Baltic 21 has succeeded in establishing a platform for regional and cross-sectoral cooperation. Additionally, the most recent World Summit in Johannesburg and other factors have defined a new set of challenges that will affect future regional efforts toward sustainable development generally, and the Baltic 21 process specifically:

- The recent enlargement of the European Union significantly changes the strategic situation for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region, and Baltic 21 processes can be expected to attract additional support from the EU level, with a special emphasis on enhancing cooperation with Russia. Many of the sustainability challenges of the Baltic Sea Region are fundamentally regional in nature, and Baltic 21 is ideally positioned to support the increasing cooperation that their solutions will require.
- Baltic 21’s strength is in its role as a multi-stakeholder forum for dialogue, and cooperation on sustainable development

among the Baltic Sea States, NGOs and other regional networks. It has the potential to strongly support regional initiatives and policy development, at a moment when the integration of sustainability into regional processes is a critical strategic need for enhancing cohesion and competitiveness in a global market.

- Change driven through the Sectors remains basic to the success of Baltic 21. The next five-year period will require resource allocations from the Sectors and increased emphasis on cross-sectoral initiatives that will better address all the three dimensions of sustainable development. Lessons learned during the first five years also suggest a need to focus future efforts on fewer initiatives that are larger, bolder, and likely to produce tangible results that are visible in the region.

Baltic 21 remains committed to providing a regional network for the implementation of the globally agreed Agenda 21 and World Summit on Sustainable Development activities, while focusing on the regional context of sustainable development.

The review of the first five years of the Baltic 21 process and the challenges ahead call for Baltic 21 to refocus and better streamline its work. To achieve this,

as outlined in the proposed new mandate adopted by the Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (cf. Annex), Baltic 21 activities should be centred on the following four action areas:

- Supporting the CBSS and its processes in the pursuit of sustainable development;
- Strengthening involvement of the Baltic 21 Sectors and Spatial Planning in cross-sectoral work, and working towards achieving the agreed goals and visions;
- Adopting and acting as the umbrella for a focused set of “Lighthouse Projects” designed to demonstrate sustainable development in action, and
- Identifying funding sources to support the Lighthouse Projects and other region-level sustainable development initiatives.

Through this new line of action, Baltic 21 aims to play an instrumental role in the realisation of its proposed vision of the Baltic Sea Region as an Eco-Region for Sustainable Development.

“It is important for the whole [Baltic 21] process that progress be reviewed regularly by the highest political level in the region. The Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region should receive a progress report, including a review of the progress of fulfilling the set-up goals, approximately every 5th year ...”

— *An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, 10.2.1.1*



Sustainable Development Trends in the Baltic Sea Region: a Concise Assessment

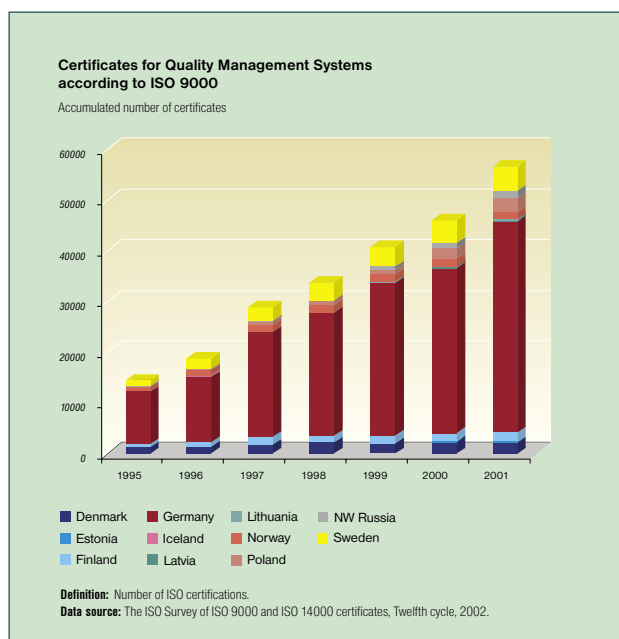
Achieving sustainable development – the integration of economic, environmental, and social dimensions over the long term – is widely recognized to be among the most pressing and difficult challenges facing humanity. Regional indicators developed by Baltic 21, in cooperation with its Sectors, reveal that the Baltic Sea Region has enjoyed significant progress towards sustainable development in recent years; but there remain important warning signals and critical trends still to be addressed.

Despite improvement efforts, negative trends in key aspects of the Transport, Agriculture, and Fisheries Sectors continue; and unless reversed, these trends could undermine the gains in other areas. Progress varies among countries, and data are incomplete, but the measurable long-term trends are sufficiently similar and robust to permit a general assessment at the regional scale.

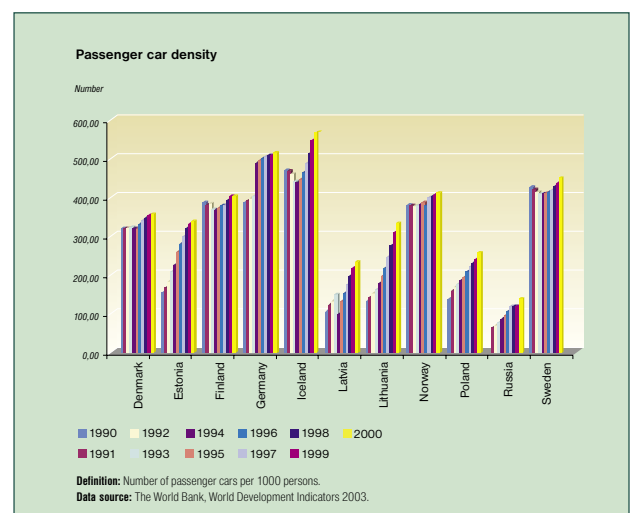
Economically, the region is wealthy in comparison to the rest of the world, and economic growth per capita has increased steadily over a decade. A wide gap remains between the older and newer market economies, of

course, but the gap is narrowing. Tourism within the region has slowly increased. Management systems throughout the region have rapidly embraced quality standards (as measured by ISO 9000 adoption rates), enhancing economic competitiveness.

Environmentally, the region has seen a rapid diffusion and adoption of Environmental Management Systems and Local Agenda 21 programs, increasing energy efficiency (relative to economic output), declining sulfur dioxide emissions, increasing forest cover, the return of wild salmon stocks, and the stabilization of the pelagic fisheries.



Sample Economic Trend: The rapid spread of Quality Management Systems throughout the Baltic Sea Region.



Sample Environmental Trend: Sharp increases in cars per capita, the vast majority of which are fossil-fuel driven and contribute to regional CO₂ emissions.

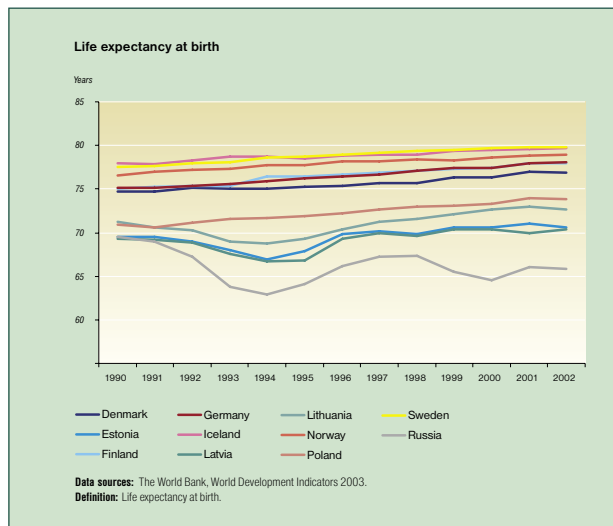
However, significant challenges remain in controlling CO₂ emissions, with rapid increases in automobile density apparently offsetting gains in energy efficiency and renewable energy adoption. Nitrogen fertilizer use is decreasing (per hectare), but overall nutrient loads in the Baltic Sea have not improved and appear to be increasing. The Baltic marine ecosystem as a whole continues to be threatened, and the cod stock is still outside safe biological limits.



Socially, the region enjoys high life expectancy and education levels relative to the rest of the world, with gains in life expectancy in all countries except Russia since 1994. Gaps in life expectancy between older and newer market economies are narrowing here as well.

This indicator-based assessment, based on the 2003 Triennial Report and subsequent strategic analysis, suggests that the most critical points of challenge for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region are:

- (1) Ecosystem protection for the Baltic Sea itself;
- (2) Technology change and demand management in energy use, particularly in the fossil fuel-driven Transport Sector;
- (3) Continuing and accelerated improvements in agricultural practice and policy; and
- (4) Continued attention to reducing the gaps in economic and social conditions between older and newer market economies.



Sample Social Trend: Rising regional life expectancy (except Russia).

The Baltic 21 Action Programme: a Summary Five-year Review

The formal action initiatives of Baltic 21 are structured according to an Action Programme adopted as part of the 1998 “Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region.” The Action Programme sets goals for eight “Sectors” and seven “Joint Action” (transnational and cross-sectoral) themes, as listed below.

The progress in the implementation of the Action Programme has varied considerably among Sectors and Joint Action areas, driven by the special circumstances they each face and differing levels of regional engagement. In some areas, progress has been rapid and tangible; in others it has been markedly slow. However, in all cases, a good foundation has at least been laid for continued efforts to enhance sectoral and cross-sectoral initiatives toward sustainability goals within the region.

The remainder of this report is a précis of concrete action and accomplishment within each Sector and Joint Action area. It should be noted that many actions take place in the Region that are not formally sponsored or initiated by Baltic 21, but that are in harmony with the intentions of the Action Programme and with the initial agreement by the

Prime Ministers to create an Agenda 21 process for the Baltic Sea Region.

Accomplishments by Sector

Agriculture

Work on a regional Virtual Research Institute on Sustainable Agriculture has been initiated and is going on. The Nordic Council of Ministers has provided funding for this initiative for the period 2000 - 2004. A similar initiative has been taken in Poland for a Virtual Institute on Sustainable Agriculture (VISA). VISA welcomes the participation of Agriculture Institutes from member countries of Baltic 21. In 2003 the Sector, under new leadership, established a “Task Force Sustainable Agriculture (TFSA).” An ambitious work plan focusing on cross-sectoral co-operation (Tourism Sector) and on demonstrating sustainable solutions has been adopted. Additionally a close collaboration with HELCOM and the GEF (Global Environment Facility) Baltic Sea Regional Project has been strengthened.



Education

The region has seen the development of National Action Plans for sustainability education; review of national legal frameworks for education; development of network, website, and training materials; the development of a plan for a cross-sectoral training initiative with the Agriculture Sector, initiating a project on development of and research on education for sustainable development; and the development of in-service teacher training.

Energy

The region has shown significant progress toward sustainability in this Sector, with increases in the percent of energy from renewables and natural gas, decreases in energy intensity, and declines in key pollutants, including carbon dioxide. The Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC) has assumed responsibility for the Baltic 21 Action Programme on this issue. Activities of BASREC have been financed mainly by the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers and by the Synergy Programme of the EU. BASREC has pursued continuing dialogues and activities on regional integration of electricity and gas markets, cooperation on energy efficiency, climate issues and a task force on bioenergy. To develop the Baltic Sea Region to a Testing Ground of Kyoto flexible mechanisms is a key policy for BASREC. According to the ministerial decision in Vilnius in November 2002, BASREC will continue to fulfill its task during the years 2003 – 2005.

Fisheries

Application of an Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management by the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) has resulted in significant habitat restoration and wild salmon recovery in some Baltic rivers; controlled catches of pelagic fish at relatively high levels that appear to be sustainable over several years; sharp reductions in Baltic cod harvesting (though the cod remains outside safe biological limits and needs continued protection); and improvements in aquaculture technology.

Forest

Continuing and significant programs carried out by the Forest Sector have successfully linked some countries and Sectors together to promote sustainable private forest management, bioenergy production, forest management and chain of custody schemes, marketing and communications projects for wood products from sustainably managed forests, and related research and analysis projects. Overall, sustainable forest management practices appear to be steadily spreading throughout the region.

Industry

An active Industry Task Force and significant funding from the Swedish government (40 million SEK) have contributed to the general and very rapid spread of Environmental Management Systems and business cooperation throughout the Region. In addition, the Task Force oversaw 30 specific projects on a wide variety of topics, including environmental permitting, chemicals management, green technology transfer, eco-efficiency best practices, business-to-business collaboration on new industries like biofuels and green product development, and collaborative research and “industrial match-making” through a virtual research network, the Baltic 21 Institute (www.baltic21institute.org).

Tourism

A task force was established and conferences and workshops were organised (especially in the Baltic States) on sustainable tourism development, rural tourism and eco-tourism projects. A project to strengthen a cross-sector network of sustainable tourism stakeholders has started, supported by INTERREG IIIB. Cooperation with VASAB and the Agriculture Sector has been initiated. An agreement was reached to establish a clearinghouse of information on sustainable tourism practices and examples for the region. Indicators to monitor the development of sustainable tourism in a coastal region were developed by Germany. Sustainability labeling of tourism destinations is spreading throughout the region: in Denmark “Destination 21”, in Germany “Viabono”, in Latvia and Lithuania “Green Certificate” and in Sweden the eco-label “Nature’s best”.

Transport

Several activities promoting development of environmentally friendly modes of transport, short sea shipping and modal shift have been carried out by Baltic 21 members. The Latvian Ministry of Transport has implemented a study assessing the progress in Short Sea Shipping (SSS). The Baltic Ports Organisation (BPO) has contributed to promoting short sea shipping through their Baltic 21-SSS survey made by the Port of Gdańsk and the Maritime University of Gdańsk, Poland. Germany is conducting a study on carrying out Agenda 21 in European Seaports, and the Union of the Baltic Cities is implementing its “New Hansa of Sustainable Ports and Cities” project. Making more tangible progress in this Sector appears to require more attention and support from the governments themselves.



Spatial Planning

The Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic 2010 (VASAB 2010) program has contributed to sustainable development in the region through dozens of joint regional projects and planning initiatives covering topics as diverse as linking ports to the hinterlands, creating a Baltic Sea Region Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Platform, and capacity building on spatial planning generally. A set of common sustainable development principles, VASAB 2010's Spatial Action Program ("VASAB 2010 Plus"), and the INTERREG III B program for funding community development initiatives have created a strong foundation for continued collaboration and integration of planning work around the region.

Accomplishments by Joint Action Theme

Bioenergy and Renewable Energy ("Joint Action 1")

This theme is covered by the Energy Sector and by several other Joint Actions.

Regional Fora and Networks for Sustainable Development ("Joint Action 2")

There are now many such fora and networks, both formal and informal operating throughout the region in nearly all Sectors. These interactions happen both within and outside of the Baltic 21 framework, and range from the formal Baltic Local Agenda 21 Forum for community-based municipal actors, to informal networks of sustainability-oriented investors and entrepreneurs.

Demonstration Areas and Pilot Programs ("Joint Action 3")

In preparation for specific pilot program initiation, Baltic 21 has been collecting information on already-existing and planned demonstration and pilot projects for each Sector, and identifying those of a cross-sectoral nature.

Cooperation among Cities for Sustainable Development ("Joint Action 4")

Through the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), eleven specific joint cooperation projects linked cities as well as the international agencies and organizations that support

their Local Agenda 21 programs; and 75% of regional cities who are members of UBC also participated in sustainability-related meetings, conferences, and projects. A well-functioning cooperative network is solidly in place.

Sustainable Technology Procurement ("Joint Action 5")

Working through the Industry Sector Task Force, Baltic 21 first analysed key factors affecting sustainable technology procurement in the Baltic Sea Region, politically, economically, and technically. It then identified a family of key sustainable technologies in the area of energy, water, and transport that were appropriate to focus on at the level of regional feasibility study. This research now sets the stage for a fully realized feasibility study of mechanisms to promote procurement of the target sustainable technologies throughout the region.

Information for Sustainable Development ("Joint Action 6")

Information availability and transparency has significantly improved during the first mandate period. Baltic 21 has produced two integrated assessments of sustainable development trends in the Baltic Sea Region, and through its website, documentation on Baltic 21-sponsored sustainable development activity is easily accessible to the public. These include all documentation on Baltic 21 processes, including strategic analyses of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to sustainable development initiatives in the region. In addition, the Baltic 21 Institute makes information available on partnership and funding possibilities for sustainability programs.

Increasing Consumer Awareness ("Joint Action 7")

Working through Baltic Local Agenda 21 Forum (BLA21F), five projects – two of them in Russia – have been executed to raise awareness and build engagement in both local and national-level sustainability initiatives. Materials on Local Agenda 21 have been prepared in local languages of new EU member countries. As a result programs are growing in St. Petersburg and the new member countries, and specific projects have engaged young people, citizens, and civic officials on topics such as, EU environmental policy, local environmental planning, local participation in decision-making process and environmental education.



A New Mandate for Baltic 21

Annex

**Proposed for submission to the 5th Baltic Sea States Summit
21 June 2004, Laulasmaa, Estonia**

The Mission of Baltic 21 is to pursue sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region by regional multi-stakeholder co-operation. Accordingly, Baltic 21 provides a regional network to implement the globally agreed Agenda 21 and World Summit on Sustainable Development activities, while focusing on the regional context of sustainable development.

The Heads of Government are committed to realising a vision of the Baltic Sea Region as an “Eco-Region” – where “Eco” stands for both “Economy” and “Ecology” and where the Social dimension is understood to be strongly integrated. The region aims to be seen by the world, as a “lighthouse” or beacon of sustainable development, and Baltic 21 will play an instrumental role in the realisation of this vision.

1. Baltic 21 will support the CBSS and its processes in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Baltic 21 will work closely with the CBSS to promote the integration of sustainable development into regional policy making. It will also review regional trends and policies impacting the sustainability of the region, as well as make recommendations to the CBSS for regional discussion, joint action, or for further discussion with other bodies whose policies affect the region.

2. Baltic 21 Sectors and Spatial Planning will strengthen involvement in cross-sectoral work, and will work towards achieving the agreed goals and visions.

Sectors and Spatial Planning shall continue to work on bringing added value to regional efforts for sustainable development, with an emphasis on solving regional problems through cross-sectoral cooperation. The Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG) will use its multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral character as a forum for fostering sustainability issues.

3. Baltic 21 will adopt and act as the umbrella for a focused set of “Lighthouse Projects” designed to demonstrate sustainable development in action.

Baltic 21 “Lighthouse Projects” are to be selected to ensure high-visibility and to engage as many participating countries and sectors as possible in proving the value-added of sustainable development. “Lighthouse Projects” will differ from “pilot projects” in that they will focus the energy of Baltic 21 within a few specific areas. Also, they are envisaged as transnational in scope, and will involve the broader implementation of existing solutions, in addition to the demonstration of new solutions.

Baltic 21 will also continue to endorse sustainable development initiatives and pilot projects in sectoral or multi-sectoral contexts and encourage the further development of those elements of its Action Programme that have been successful.

4. Baltic 21 will identify funding sources to support the Lighthouse Projects and other region-level sustainable development initiatives.

Baltic 21 is to develop an innovative mechanism focused on creating synergies among existing national and other funding sources at the regional-level. It will continue to build on its successful history of securing project-specific financial sponsorship.

Members of the Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG)

(As of 5 June 2004)

Countries

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden

European Commission

Intergovernmental Organisations

Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs
Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)
International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC)
Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR)
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB 2010)

International Financial Institutions

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
European Investment Bank (EIB)
Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO)
Nordic Investment Bank (NIB)
World Bank (WB)

International Sub-State and City Networks

Baltic Local Agenda 21 Forum (BLA21F)
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC)
Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)
Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC)

International Business Networks

Baltic Fishermen's Association (BFA)
Baltic Ports Organisation (BPO)
Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC)
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

International Academic Network

Baltic University Programme (BUP)

International Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations

Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB)
European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC)
Keep Baltic Tidy (KBT)
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF International)

This present publication builds on the periodic Baltic 21 assessments of the progress towards sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region as well as on the assessment of the accomplishments of the Baltic 21 Sectors, Spatial Planning and Joint Actions. So far Baltic 21 has made two comprehensive regional assessments (see the list of publications provided below). The most recent comprehensive assessment was developed in the beginning of the year 2003 and covers the period from 2000 to 2002. Additionally, during 2002-2004, when developing its new policy and strategy, Baltic 21 has also made a strategic self-assessment of its process. All these assessments provided the background for this report.

A full presentation of the Baltic 21 work, including all indicators and reported data, is available on the Baltic 21 website at www.baltic21.org, and on a Baltic 21 CD-ROM 1/2003. Printed reports presenting selected indicators and progress reports from the Baltic 21 Sectors, Spatial Planning and Joint Actions are available from the Baltic 21 Secretariat and in a pdf format on the Baltic 21 website.

The following publications have been published so far in the Baltic 21 Series:

No. 1/98	An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region
No. 2/98	The Baltic Sea Agenda 21 Sector Report – Agriculture ¹
No. 3/98	Sustainable Energy Development in the Baltic Sea Region
No. 4/98	Sector Report on Fisheries, Contribution to Baltic 21 ²
No. 5/98	Baltic 21 Action Programme for Sustainable Development of the Baltic Sea Region – Sector Report on Forests ³
No. 6/98	Sustainable Development of the Industrial Sector in the Baltic Sea Region
No. 7/98	Agenda 21 – Baltic Sea Region Tourism ⁴
No. 8/98	Baltic 21 Transport Sector Report ⁵
No. 9/98	Spatial Planning for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region
No. 10/98	Financing the Baltic 21: An Overview
No. 11/98	Local Agenda 21 Report
No. 12/98	Environmental Citizen Organisation's (ECO's) Vision of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region
No. 13/98	Indicators on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region – An Initial Set
No. 14/98	Vision of Sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region: Beyond Conventional Development
No. 15/98	Information for Joint Policy and Decision Making towards a Sustainable Baltic Sea Region
No. 1/2000	Baltic 21 Biennial Report – 2000
No. 2/2000	Development in the Baltic Sea Region towards the Baltic 21 Goals – An Indicator Based Assessment
No. 1/2002	An Agenda 21 for Education in the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21E
No. 1/2003	Baltic 21 Report 2000-2002: Towards Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region
No. 1/2004	Five Years of Regional Progress Towards Sustainable Development

¹ Also published in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Environmental Proceedings (BSEP).

² Also published in the IBSFC Proceedings.

³ Also included in the Publications of the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

⁴ Also published by the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry, Working Papers 6/1998.

⁵ Also published by the German Federal Environmental Agency in the TEXTS series.