

BALEX: Research activities begin to take shape

The six months that have passed since the previous BALEX newsletter have been successful for the initiative. Among other things, certain key areas of interest have been selected for the coming years through strategy work, a very competent and helpful Advisory Board has been established, the team has made a useful visit to Brussels which is already generating results, and BALEX is strongly on its way to become a well-known player, at least in the Finnish perspective, hoping to broaden its activities further in the coming years. Most importantly, research projects have been approved and recruitments made, which ensure that the BALEX team will be busy undertaking legal research of practical and academic relevance for several years to come.

SETTING BALEX GOALS FOR 2015-2017

Early in the year the BALEX Steering Group^{*)}, composed of representatives of the two participating universities, agreed on a guidance document, a strategy, for BALEX up to 2017. The strategy seeks to assist focusing the activities of BALEX into three areas that are considered to be particularly interesting for the moment. During the coming years BALEX will accordingly mainly focus on **maritime transport, environmental protection and maritime spatial planning**.

The vision is that within the coming years BALEX develops into: an internationally leading legal research network in close collaboration with its academic partners; an acknowledged research and teaching environment for both academic and vocational training; and a platform for public debates and discussions on a broad range of issues of relevance for the Baltic Sea region.

^{*)} BALEX Steering Group members are from the University of Turku professor, dean Jukka Mähönen / Chair (until 31.7.2015); professor, dean Jussi Tapani (from 1.8.2015 onwards), professor Anne Kumpula and professor Ari Saarnilehto; and from the Åbo Akademi University professor Markku Suksi / Chair and professor Elina Pirjatanniemi.

BALEX ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORTS THE EFFORT

The very first meeting of the BALEX Advisory Board was held in February 2015 in Turku, Finland. The Board affirmed the need for high-level research and training on legal aspects of the development in the Baltic Sea region and considered that the BALEX network was well placed for responding to this demand. The Board will support the BALEX team with their insight into current and future developments in the region and with their availability of further contacts.

The Advisory Board elected Judge **Allan Rosas** (in picture) at the Court of Justice of the European Union as its Chair. Judge Rosas is also Senior Fellow of the University of Turku and a visiting Professor at the College of Europe and the University of Helsinki.



Other members of the Advisory Board are Region Mayor **Kari Häkämies** (Regional Council of Southwest Finland), Principal Legal Adviser on International Law **Marie Jacobsson** (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden), Chief Adviser **Anita Mäkinen** (Finnish Transport Safety Agency), Ambassador for Baltic Sea issues **Erja Tikka** (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland), and President **Jussi Mälkiä** (Meriaura Group). Work is still on-going with respect to complementing the Board with suitable candidates based in the Eastern and Southern parts of the Baltic Sea region.

The Board's next meeting will most likely be held in October 2015.

BALEX TEAM VISITS STAKEHOLDERS IN BRUSSELS

In April 2015 a four person strong delegation from BALEX visited some key stakeholders in Brussels. The purpose of the visit was to present the initiative to key decision-makers and to discuss ways in which BALEX could support current activities

related to regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and beyond. The meetings also represented an opportunity to discuss current trends and developments that call for further research and training in the future.

The meetings highlighted, among other things, the need for accessible information and contacts relating to regional regulation, the importance of vocational training among BALEX's activities, the usefulness of linking legal research projects to existing concrete projects in other domains, and the significance of the theme sustainable blue growth.

The BALEX team wants to extend a warm thank you for inspiring discussions, insight and affirmation to MEP **Sirpa Pietikäinen** and Parliamentary Advisor **Aino Valtanen**; Deputy Head of Unit **Vicente Rodriguez Saez** and Programme Managers **Peter Schenk** and **Odd Godall** from DG REGIO; Counsellors **Jussi Yli-Lahti** and **Päivi Wood** from Finland's Permanent Representation to the European Union; and Policy Officer **Kristel Jurado** from DG MARE. Finally, Head of Office **Krista Taipale** from the Turku-Southwest Finland European Office deserves credit for the impeccable preparation and support during the visit.



BALEX team in Brussels (from left to right): Professor Markku Suksi, Åbo Akademi University; Planner Salla-Maria Lauttamäki, University of Turku; Professor Jukka Mähönen, University of Turku, Adjunct Professor Henrik Ringbom, Åbo Akademi University; and Head of Office Krista Taipale from the Turku-Southwest Finland European Office. Photo: Katri Puhakainen

ON-GOING PROJECTS

BaltReg digs deeper into the multi-level governance of Baltic Sea region

In June 2015 the Academy of Finland approved a three-year research project of a total budget of ca. 650 000 euros on the multi-level regulation and governance of the Baltic Sea Region, **BaltReg**. The project analyses the legal interaction and interrelationship between the multiple layers of regulation in the Baltic Sea region and improves the understanding of how multi-level governance works in the region, both generally and in specific fields, from the points of view of law as well as political science. **BaltReg** is a joint project by the Department of Public Administration and the Department of Law at Åbo Akademi University and is closely linked to the BALEX initiative.

BaltReg has three main parts: Part I consists of a horizontal analysis of the Baltic Sea regulatory framework, including an assessment of the key institutions involved in governing the area and regulatory gaps and overlaps; Part II includes detailed vertical analyses of how the multi-level regulation operates in individual selected topics, ranging from various environmental issues to energy security and human rights. Part III analyses the outcome of the previous two parts, seeking to identify trends and conclusions on what type of regulation appears to be working well in different circumstances and to establish more general conclusions and recommendations on that basis.

The project also entails three international conferences, each resulting in its own publication. For more information, please contact BALEX staff or **BaltReg** lead researcher, Professor **Marko Joas** (marko.joas@abo.fi) or Adjunct Professor **Henrik Ringbom** (henrik.ringbom@abo.fi).

AWA assesses the legal challenges linked to autonomous shipping

In February 2015, the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation TEKES approved a joint industry-academia research project on autonomous ships. The project, called

AAWA (Advanced Autonomous Waterborne Applications Initiative, seeks to analyse concrete challenges in different scientific fields related to autonomous shipping operations. The prospect of autonomous shipping is widely expected to be reality both in domestic, Baltic and international maritime transportation within the foreseeable future, but the legal challenges linked to this development have not yet been studied in detail. Both the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University are involved in the legal assessment of this matter, which is said to be among the largest challenges for autonomous shipping operations to materialize.

AAWA is led by Rolls-Royce and the research partners include Aalto University, Tampere University of Technology, University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland. The other industry partners are DNV GL, Napa, Deltamarin and Inmarsat, and the project's total budget is 6,5 MEUR.

For more information, please contact BALEX staff or the **AAWA** contact persons at the University of Turku, Project Researcher **Felix Collin** (felix.collin@utu.fi), or at Åbo Akademi University, Adjunct Professor **Henrik Ringbom** (henrik.ringbom@abo.fi).

An assessment of the implementation procedure for international transport conventions in Finland

BALEX has been tasked by the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications to prepare a study on the national process for implementing international obligations in the transport field. The study analyzes one of the key challenges relating to multilayered regulation: the procedure for implementing international law and EU law obligations in domestic law in Finland.

The project assesses whether lighter implementation mechanisms and streamlining of the current procedure could be contemplated, in particular within the domain of transport law, where obligations are technical in nature and frequently updated. The study, which will also make an analysis of comparable processes in other Nordic countries, will be ready by the end of the 2015.



For more information, please contact BALEX staff or Project Researcher, Attorney **Oskar Sundelin** at Åbo Akademi University (oskar.sundelin@abo.fi).

PREPARATIONS ON-GOING FOR SUMMER SCHOOL 2016

BALEX will invite interested collaborators for a kick-off meeting during autumn 2015 regarding an international summer school initiative on multilevel governance and regulation in the Baltic Sea region. More information will be sent shortly.

With all inquiries related to BALEX and suggestions for collaboration, please contact our personnel!

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Wishing all BALEX collaborators a relaxing summertime!

