

## BALEX: A new network on legal study on the Baltic Sea Region

Baltic Area Legal Studies BALEX is a new network established by the Faculty of Law of the University of Turku and the Department of Law of the Åbo Akademi University in Finland. The three main aims of BALEX are: to carry out legal research in matters that are of relevance for - and common to - the Baltic Sea region; to offer interdisciplinary academic education programs for students; and to provide vocational training for lawyers, civil servants and officials in the Baltic Sea region by organising guest lectures, conferences and workshops on topical themes. BALEX aims at filling the current void in all these areas.

The focus of the activities will shift over time, but irrespective of the themes, a particular interest of BALEX will be on the institutions and multi-layered governance and regulation of the Baltic Sea region, which is unique in the world and offers plenty of scope for interesting research. Particularly interesting legal developments are currently taking place in the areas of environment regulation, fisheries, energy, maritime transport and military security. During its first years the emphasis of BALEX's research initiatives will be on two themes in particular: maritime transport and environmental governance.

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### MANY LEVELS OF CO-OPERATION

BALEX was formally launched during the "Turku Baltic Sea Days" in June 2014. During its first year, BALEX has focused on setting up its network and establishing partnerships around the Baltic Sea region. Its activities in terms of projects and planning have mostly focused on Finland and, to some extent, Sweden, but the intention is to expand the activities to other Baltic Sea region countries in the coming years.

#### **Research**

BALEX has already prepared or contributed to several proposals for research projects related to the legal issues of relevance for the Baltic Sea region. Funding has been sought from Finnish and EU sources, and decisions are expected in the first half of 2015. The proposed projects address multi-level regulation in the Baltic Sea region in selected areas of law and various aspects of shipping regulation, including legal challenges related to the

enforcement of new fuel requirements in the Baltic Sea region and to unmanned shipping operations.

### **Education**

BALEX is currently negotiating to start operations in the field of education, and hopes these will materialize in the forthcoming years. For instance, a summer school for advanced students is foreseen to begin in the summer 2016. This course will be offered in cooperation with a broad range of other universities in the region. Another need that has been identified, at least in Finland, is a comprehensive university training course in international, Nordic and national transportation law.

### **Projects**

BALEX was tasked by the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications to elaborate an analysis on the available options for implementing sanctions for violations of the forthcoming sulphur in fuel requirements, which will be significantly strengthened in the Baltic Sea as from January 2015. The report was delivered in early November 2014. A follow-up report on a related theme is currently being discussed.

BALEX staff is also co-operating closely with research projects in other countries, such as with the Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law at the University of Oslo (jurisdictional limitations for imposing national employment conditions on ships providing services to installations on the Norwegian continental shelf/exclusive economic zone) and with staff at the K.G. Jepsen Centre for the Oceans Law in Tromsø (governance of sea areas beyond national jurisdiction).

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## **NETWORK PARTNERS**

BALEX's scientific partners already form an impressive network. It includes legal research environments such as:

- Walther Schücking Institute for International Law, Kiel University (Germany)
- K.G. Jepsen Centre for the Law of the Sea, University of Tromsø (Norway)
- Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law, University of Oslo (Norway)
- Admiral Makarov State University of Maritime and Inland Shipping (Russia)
- Free University of Brussels (Belgium)
- CEVIA – Centre for Enterprise Liability, University of Copenhagen (Denmark)
- The Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, University of Lapland (Finland)

- Axel Ax:son Johnson Institute of Maritime and Transport Law, Stockholm University (Sweden)
- University of Tallinn (Estonia)
- Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia)
- Mykolas Romeris university (Lithuania)

Apart from the partners among universities, BALEX collaborates with the City of Turku, the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, the Government of Åland, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Helsinki Commission HELCOM, the Baltic University Programme BUP, the Baltic Sea Region University Network BSRUN, the Centrum Balticum Foundation, the Union of the Baltic Cities UBC, the Baltic Sea Foundation, the Baltic Sea Action Group BSAG, the European Foundation and the Schuman Society in Finland.

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## HIGH-LEVEL ADVISORY BOARD TO MEET IN TURKU EARLY 2015

The BALEX Advisory Board meets annually to discuss the current targets and emphasis of the network. The Advisory Board's members are prominent jurists and decision-makers from the Baltic Sea region.

Confirmed members are **Allan Rosas**, Professor and Member of the Court of Justice of the European Union, **Erja Tikka**, Ambassador for Baltic Sea Issues, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, **Marie Jacobsson**, Principal Legal Adviser on International Law at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Member of the United Nations International Law Commission, and **Kari Häkämies**, Region Mayor of the Regional Council of Southwest Finland (as of 2015). Additional members will be announced later.

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## STEERING GROUP SETS STRATEGIC TARGETS

The BALEX Steering Group meets 2-4 times a year to set strategic targets to Baltic Area Legal Studies and to guide its operations. Its members represent the two co-operating universities in Turku, Finland.

From the University of Turku the members are **Jukka Mähönen**, Dean and Professor of Civil Law, **Anne Kumpula**, Professor of Environmental Law and **Ari Saarnilehto**, Professor of Civil Law.

From the Åbo Akademi University the members are **Elina Pirjatanniemi**, Head of Department and Professor of Constitutional and International Law, Director of the Institute for Human Rights, and **Markku Suksi**, Professor of Public Law.

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## BALEX STAFF

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



### **Henrik Ringbom**

Adjunct Professor (Docent) in Maritime Law and the Law of the Sea, Åbo Akademi University  
Professor II, Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law, University of Oslo

[henrik.ringbom@abo.fi](mailto:henrik.ringbom@abo.fi)



### **Salla-Maria Lauttamäki**

Planner, M.Soc.Sc., University of Turku

[salla-maria.lauttamaki@utu.fi](mailto:salla-maria.lauttamaki@utu.fi)

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The BALEX team wishes its collaborators  
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!