

Study on internal nutrient reserves published

Since the last newsletter, several BALEX activities have taken place. The assessment of the contribution of the Baltic Sea's internal nutrient reserves on eutrophication and the legal, political and institutional aspects of potential mitigation measures is now [published](#). The project was commissioned by Finland's Ministry of the Environment and conducted together with Vahanen Environment Oy that was responsible of the ecological, technical and socio-economical aspects of the issue.

In the autumn, BALEX organised a research seminar "Multiple Layers of Regulation: Focus on the Baltic Sea" in Turku and a seminar "Wrecks as Environmental Risks: The Legal Framework" in Helsinki in cooperation with the Finnish Environment Institute. In May, BALEX organised a panel discussion "Can engineering save the Baltic Sea? How to deal with nutrient reserves in the seabed" in Centrum Balticum's Baltic Sea Region Forum.

In this newsletter, you will find more information about BALEX activities. Information about BALEX can also be found on Twitter, www.twitter.fi/BALEXStudies, and on our website www.balex.fi.

ASSESSMENT ON BALTIC SEA'S INTERNAL NUTRIENT RESERVES PUBLISHED

During the autumn, winter and spring, BALEX has worked on an assessment of the contribution of the Baltic Sea's internal nutrient reserves on eutrophication and the legal, political and institutional aspects of potential sea-based mitigation measures. The project was commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment of Finland.

Internal nutrient stores refer to the pool of nutrients, mainly phosphorus, in the seabed that are caused by excessive nutrient loads from the catchment area and are being released from the sediments due to anoxic bottoms. Release of nutrients from

sediments contributes to the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The study formed part of Finland's marine strategy which aims to achieve a good state of the Baltic Sea by 2020. The ecological, technical and socio-economical part of the assessment was conducted by Vahanen Environment Oy.

BALEX was in charge of reviewing the policy, legal and institutional framework regarding sea-based measures. There is no detailed regulation for sea-based measures, which means that a broad range of regulatory layers and legal principles apply. However, the applicable rules are generic and to a large extent shift the question back to factual circumstances: sea-based measures are lawful if they improve environmental protection, but not if they do not. In the current regime, the legality of sea-based measures is eventually assessed in the national permit procedures in the state where the activity takes place. The impacts of the measures on the environment and humans are important considerations when permit decisions are made and conditions attached to the permit. The study emphasizes that there are many reasons to favour a regional approach to assessing sea-based measures, and recent HELCOM discussions seem to support this approach.

The BALEX study was carried out by Adjunct Professor Henrik Ringbom, LL.D. Brita Bohman and LL.M. Saara Ilvessalo.

The [study](#) and [news](#) about the project are available on our website.



NEW STRATEGY FOR 2018–2021

The BALEX Advisory Board has adopted a [new strategy](#) for 2018–2021. The strategy emphasises three main activities of BALEX, namely: legal and interdisciplinary research; training and events. The new profiling around “the sea” of the two universities in Turku provides fertile ground for BALEX to develop further, notably in relation to the educational work at and in cross-disciplinary cooperation with and between the two universities.

BALEX will concentrate on three main substantive fields: maritime transport, environmental protection and multi-level governance. Special focus will also be given to the themes prioritised in the Baltic Sea Region strategy of Finland and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: BALEX aims at supporting e.g. sustainable development, blue economy and circular economy in its work. Active communication is key to lowering barriers between academia and the business sector & the society. One of the aims for the coming years is to strengthen the international profile and activities of BALEX.

PAST EVENTS

On 14 May, BALEX organised a [panel discussion](#) “Can engineering save the Baltic Sea? How to deal with nutrient reserves in the seabed” in Centrum Balticum’s Baltic Sea Region Forum in Turku. The panellists were discussing whether technology could provide solutions to save the Baltic Sea and to remove nutrients from the seabed. The panel was chaired by Allan Rosas, Judge at the European Court of Justice and Chair of the BALEX Advisory Board.

In the panel, it was stressed that the current state of the Baltic Sea is caused by excessive nutrient loads, and there are no quick solutions to remove the nutrients. The countries must aim at reducing nutrient loads from land ending up in the sea. However, some techniques and technologies may accelerate the healing of the sea. The panellists agreed that these technologies and their impact on the environment and the legal framework must be thoroughly studied before testing in the sea. All this requires deeper cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.



In the autumn, two BALEX seminars took place in Turku and in Helsinki. The first BALEX research seminar was organised on 31 October with the theme “Multiple Layers of Regulation: Focus on the Baltic Sea”. The keynote lectures were open events for anyone interested. Additionally, researchers sent their papers for further workshop discussions after the open lectures. The event presentations are available [here](#) and news about the seminar in Finnish [here](#).

A seminar for state authorities and other interest groups working with shipwrecks in the Baltic Sea was organised on 29-30 November with the theme “Wrecks as Environmental Risks: The Legal Framework”. The event took place in Helsinki and was a collaboration event with the Finnish Environment Institute Syke. Videos and presentations from the seminar can be found [here](#) and news about the seminar in Finnish [here](#).

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

A book with the title “Regulatory Gaps in Baltic Sea Governance” has been published under the BaltReg project: <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319750699>. In addition, BALEX Steering Group member Prof. Marko Joas has represented the project and BALEX in the media. His interview can be found in Swedish [here](#).

The work focusing on unmanned/autonomous ships, currently pursued within the D4V project, is gathering momentum. The first discussions on the topic were held at the International Maritime Organization in May 2018. BALEX was there, through Henrik Ringbom who represented the international maritime lawyers' association CMI, and actively contributed to the debate. Further seminars and events on this topic will be organized in the autumn.

BALEX is planning on an event on the current challenges and perspectives of the Council of the Baltic Sea States CBSS, in the light of the CBSS Vision Group report on recommendations for the future of Baltic Sea Region cooperation. The tentative date for the event is 23 November in Turku.

NEW IDEAS FOR COLLABORATION PROJECTS ARE WELCOMED

BALEX's main idea is to become a hub to connect the researchers of and the experts in Baltic area legal matters and to connect this expertise with the concrete needs of the Baltic Sea region; its countries, regions and cities, students, officials, NGO's and other players. BALEX is constantly looking for new research projects and is also willing to offer its legal expertise for assignments related to the Baltic Sea region and to participate with a legal perspective in on-going research projects. The expertise of BALEX and its actors can also be utilised as background information in news, external topical events and smaller research projects. BALEX warmly welcomes new associates, scientific partners and other partners in cooperation. Feel free to contact us with any ideas or suggestion!

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



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**BALEX wishes all partners and collaborators a relaxing
summer!**



Turun yliopisto
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