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BALTIC EUROPE AND ITS EASTERN BORDERS

In 1977 Jerzy Zaleski i Czesław Wojewódka introduced to scientific terminology the notion of **Baltic Europe**¹ to define the land territory economically connected with the Baltic Sea.

It was difficult to find the proper meaning of the notion for several years, as up to 1991 the territory of the Baltic Sea Countries was the field of the confrontation of two political systems and two military blocks. It was shown in distinct divisions:

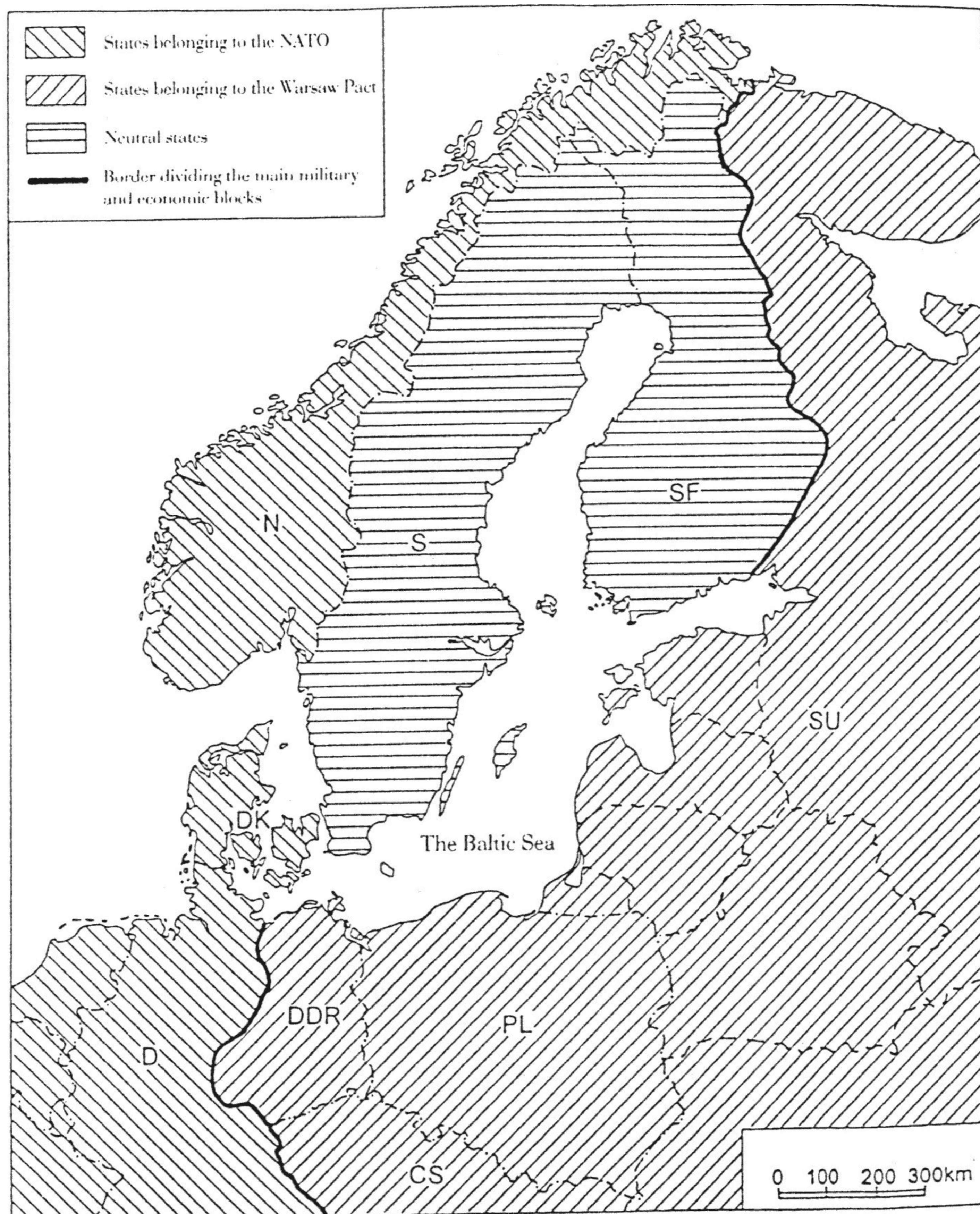
- West European democracies versus totalitarian countries,
- The Warsaw Pact countries (the German Democratic Republic, Poland, the USSR) versus the NATO countries (the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark) and neutral countries (Sweden, Finland),
- The EEC countries (the FRG, Denmark) versus the countries-members of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (the German Democratic Republic, Poland, the USSR) and not associated countries (Norway, Sweden, and Finland).

The barrier separating two social, economical and military systems divided these groups. The balance system was based on the mutual feeling of threat created by political and military doctrines. The Baltic countries differed ethnically, by political systems, culture, and religion, politically and economically. The only joining factor was their entire or partial location on the Baltic Sea. At the time the notion of Baltic Europe was limited to theoretic and subjective instrument of physical and geographical re-

¹ J. Zaleski, Cz. Wojewódka, *Europa Bałtycka, Zarys monografii gospodarczej* [Baltic Europe, An outline of economical monography], Ossolineum, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk 1977

regionalisation. It existed in the sphere of abstraction as the category describing a shaped complex of mutual political, social and economic relations. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1. Baltic Europe until 1989.



Source: The Author's elaboration

In 1991 the old geopolitical system broke down and then changed radically. Thus the circumstances to finish the artificial isolation of the Baltic neighbours occurred. The Baltic Sea area faced one of the biggest challenges in its over millenary history. It was the result of political changes in Poland, the unification of Germany, the regaining of independence by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and also reassuring the importance of the Kaliningrad District as a strategic military and naval base of Russia with the highest concentration of military forces on the Baltic Sea. The change of the geopolitical situation created new opportunities for intensive economic and cultural co-operation in this part of Europe.

Nowadays the region of **Baltic Europe**, as the region and territory of administrative, economic, cultural and infrastructural relations, is still a hypothetical notion. There are, however some evident premises for its transformation into a multinational functional region.² It can be done by means of communication links, trade, labour market, solving ecological problems. The most important binder is a political will of co-operation in all fields, with the superior aim of widely understood safety (avoiding tensions and conflicts, social safety of citizens), free exchange of goods, persons and information, as well as ecological safety.

The Nordic countries created a pattern of Baltic Co-operation after the World War II. The pattern or its elements find application in a broad co-operation of all Baltic Countries in many fields. The institutions of the Nordic co-operation underwent substantial evolution during decades³. At the moment of establishing they concentrated only a part of the Nordic States; the next joined them after some time. In other situations the institutions were the centre where concentrated other Baltic States interested in co-operation in a certain field. The Nordic Council is very much engaged in consolidating the Nordic identity and union - among others through designating half of the Nordic budget for cultural, social and scientific co-operation⁴

Since 1991 the Nordic countries have addressed their interest in the field of foreign policy and safety to the countries of the Baltic Sea region.

² J.S. Storm Pedersen, *The Baltic Region and the New Europe*, Roskilde University, Roskilde 1993.

³ The Nordic Commission of Tourism, established in 1925, is one of the oldest institutions. Between 1945 and 1990 by a decision of the Nordic Council of Ministers, 95 common specialised Nordic institutions for co-operation were established.

⁴ B. Kolečka, *Rada Nordycka, Nordycka Rada Ministrów* [The Nordic Council, The Nordic Council of Ministers], (in:) S. Parzymies (ed.), *Europejskie struktury współpracy* [European Structures of Co-operation], Warszawa 1997, p.193.

With reference to historical ties connecting Scandinavia with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers have helped in building state structures in these countries, supported integration with the European Union and also conducted a broad aid in economical and industrial co-operation, in environment protection, social and health care and media. The aid conducted by the Baltic Investment Programme the Nordic Environmental Funding Co-operation (NEFCO) and the Research Programme in Environmental Protection. Besides the three Baltic countries also Poland has used the aid organised by the Scandinavian states.

In the post-war period political divisions in Baltic Europe area hindered development of institutional links including all Baltic States. The first links of this type concerned the Baltic Sea environmental protection, the field comparatively less burdened with political divisions⁵ where as early as in 1973 joint works on protection of the Baltic waters and living resources were started.

The turning point that opened a new era in the Baltic co-operation was the 1990s. The co-operation started at the time has developed in many fields and has had many subjects. It has been running on different administrative levels in different economical sectors and also between non-governmental organisations.

Political decisions gave a fundamental impulse to start the co-operation during the summit talks of the Baltic States' Prime Ministers in Ronneby in 1990. The agreement on working out a regional programme of limiting loads of pollutants carried to the Baltic Sea in order to regain the ecological balance of the sea area was included in the signed *Baltic Sea Declaration*.

Among other resolutions decisions on extension of the programme on monitoring of the Baltic Sea environment, and development of the programme protecting natural values through protected areas creation were taken. It was also decided about consolidation of the co-operation and making contacts within the region, engaging governmental institutions and local authorities, etc. Article 15 of the Ronneby Declaration says that the Baltic countries' governments will stimulate „the co-operative consolida-

⁵ H. Ognik, R. Popiński, Instytucjonalizacja współpracy w regionie Europy Bałtyckiej-stan i perspektywy [Institutionalisation of Co-operation in the Baltic Europe Region - Condition and Perspectives], (in:) B. Jałowiecki, Europa Bałtycka, Europejski Instytut Rozwoju Regionalnego i Lokalnego, Uniwersytet Warszawski [Baltic Europe, European Institute of Regional and Local Development, University of Warsaw], Warszawa 1992 ,p.81.

tion and facilitation of mutual relations between people in the region to improve the Baltic Sea environment, e.g. through participation of local and regional authorities, governmental and private institutions, industries and non-governmental organisations in the fields of economy trade, science, culture, information, etc."⁶

The next event of political character that had a primary influence on the processes of Baltic integration took place in Visby in 1996. The meeting of the Prime Ministers ended with signing a declaration beginning with the words: stability, welfare, and solidarity. In the activity programme there were, for instance, provisions of giving help to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in the process of preparing these countries to the European Union membership, support for creating free trade zone between the said countries, support for establishing special economical zone in Kaliningrad which will contribute to trade liberalisation and economic growth in the whole Baltic region, and also provisions for intensification of the co-operation in energetic and nuclear safety.

The third „summit" talks of the Baltic States' Prime Ministers took place in Riga in 1998. In the Riga Declaration the attention was paid, for instance, to modelling regional identity based on neighbourly bonds, common history, cultural heritage, democratic values, human rights respect, and the fundamental principle of freedom. Activities were undertaken to intensify the co-operation of the Baltic region states in such fields as culture, education, economic co-operation, transport, energetic, environmental protection and human rights. Usefulness of further development of non-governmental organisations, supplementary to the international co-operation, was pointed out.

The Prime Ministers of the Baltic region states backed development of the economic co-operation in the region and also the need for undertaking joint efforts aiming at the sea port development and extension of the links between the ports and their hinterland. The project of creating the Baltic Energetic Ring - a common network for the Baltic States, facilitating electricity exchange - was accepted.

The organised conferences not only make for the integration power around the Baltic Sea but have also marked out priorities for state departments of different levels and secured their expenses. Except the Baltic States Prime Ministers, also the President of European Union took part in the meetings. The evolution of the meetings was essential. The first meeting concerned indisputable matters in respect of politics, such as in-

⁶J. Wiejacz, *Baltic Regional Co-operation*, Warszawa 1992, p.48.

tensification of co-operation and environmental protection. The last one concerned more complicated matters and, in some cases, even controversial.⁷

The belief in ability of free and full co-operation in the Baltic Sea region after the Baltic States had gained their independence was an impulse for appointing **the Council of the Baltic Sea States**⁸ in Copenhagen in 1992. This is a form of cooperation on a governmental level led by the foreign ministers. The superior aim of the regional undertaking is to initiate, support, and promote the co-operation with the maintenance of close contact with other countries and Baltic organisations.

The Declaration of the Council of the Baltic Sea States accepted in Copenhagen established six priority directions of the co-operation:

- aid for new democratic institutions,
- economical and technological aid and co-operation meant as creation of an important European integration level in the future,
- social aid and health service,
- environment protection and energetic,
- co-operation in culture, education, tourism and information transfer,
- transport and communication.

In Article 5 it was stressed, for instance, that the basic aim of the co-operation in culture is reinforcement of regional identity, the importance of low-level contacts and direct co-operation of people, institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations in culture.⁹

There are three working groups within the Council:

- The Working Group for Democratic Institutions Support
- The Working Group for Economical Co-operation
- The Working Group for Radiological and Nuclear Safety

Establishing the Eurofaculty in 1993 with the seat at the Riga University and branches at the Tartu and Vilnius Universities and also in Kaliningrad in 1996 was one of important initiatives of the Baltic Sea

⁷ J. Zaucha, Integracja wokół Bałtyku [Integration around the Baltic Sea], (in:) E. Toczyska (ed.), Podstawy reformy samorządowej [Foundations of Local Government Reform], Akademicki Ośrodek Edukacji Samorządowej Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego [Academic Centre for Local Governmental Education at University of Gdańsk], Gdańsk 1998 p. 93.

⁸ Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

⁹ K. Wróblewska, Instytucje i organizacje międzynarodowe regionu bałtyckiego [International Institutions and Organizations of the Baltic Region], (in:) J. Ročławski, G. Grzelak (ed.), Współpraca międzynarodowa w regionie bałtyckim, warunki powołania euroregionu południowo-wschodniego Bałtyku [International Co-operation in the Baltic Region, the Conditions of Establishing the Southeastern Baltic Euroregion], Gdańsk, pp. 102-103.

States Council. It is a teaching programme supporting educational system reforms in the three Baltic States and the Kaliningrad District in the following fields: law, public administration, management and economy. A special group for Organised Crime was also established. The exchange of information is thanks to the communication network BALTCOM. Common initiatives are undertaken to fight illegal migration, amphetamine production and trafficking, trade with people, illegal trafficking of stolen cars, etc.. Liquidation of two unsafe nuclear reactors in Estonia was an undoubted success.

In 1996 in the period of the Swedish Presidency, some documents important for the co-operation in the Baltic Sea region were accepted. They were three programmes accepted in Kalmar. The aim was to widen the contacts among the Baltic nations, an increase in social safety, economic co-operation and integration and supporting the environmental protection. The Baltic Sea State Council patronises several organisations and institutions such as: the Baltic Towns Union, the Association of Baltic Trade Chambers, the Baltic Commission of Tourism and the Baltic Sea States Subregional Conference (BSSSC).

The Baltic Sea States Council is one of the most important regional groups in Europe and relations with the European Union got a particular meaning after Sweden's and Finland's accessions to the European Union.

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Conference¹⁰ is an independent organisation acting under the auspices of the Baltic States Council. The aim of the conference is to promote co-operation in economy, technology, ecology, health, social matters, education, youth culture, transport and communication among the Baltic Sea Are Subregions.¹¹ The representatives of local and regional authorities, economic self-government, cultural, youth non-governmental, etc., institutions and organisations, meet once a year. The basic tasks accepted on the conference are the following:

- performing the role of a contact centre in the Baltic region,
- working out a common policy for the Baltic region and representing it at the meetings of the Baltic Sea States Council, the European Union and particular governments,
- activities on behalf of the better use of financial means which enable introducing definite projects for all the Baltic region's welfare,

¹⁰ Baltic Sea States Subregional Conference (BSSSC)

¹¹ W. Toczyński, *Profile współpracy bałtyckiej* [Profiles of the Baltic Co-operation], Pomost, No7/98, p.19

- performing the role of „an umbrella" (apart from CBSS) for all the actors and organisations in the region, as well as contributing to quick information transfer and the development of further subregional co-operation.¹²

In its assumptions the BSSSC conference is to be a field for the exchange of experience between regions and to contribute to new forms of co-operation.

The foreign ministers are not the only group on the central level who comes into co-operation in Baltic Europe. Regular meetings, apart from the Prime Ministers, are also held by the ministers responsible for spatial planning, transport, environmental protection and culture.

The co-operation among the ministers responsible for planning and spatial development of 11 States of Baltic Europe, together with Norway and Belarus, was started in Karlskrona in 1992. It was the beginning of the program „Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010".¹³ The objectives of the program are the following:

- supporting the development of the tie network in the Baltic region,
- enabling the transfer of knowledge, abilities and know-how to the countries undergoing economical changes,
- widening knowledge and information about problems and recent development trends in other countries in the region,
- facilitating the planning process through dissemination of achievements and planning conceptions of other Baltic countries,
- evaluating important infrastructural projects of international importance.¹⁴

The strategies worked out together are to facilitate making decisions in spatial development on the state, regional and local levels. The strategies and recommended activities are focused on transnational aspects and in the matter of all Baltic Europe. Their receivers are the subject creating the future of the region - politicians, administration, economic organisations, private investors, financing institutions, non-governmental organisations promoting regional development and environmental protection as well as scientific institutes dealing with spatial planning.

¹² W. Toczyński, Profile współpracy bałtyckiej [Profiles of the Baltic Co-operation] ... op.cit, p.19

¹³ Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB 2010)

¹⁴ W. Toczyński (ed.), Region bałtycki, rozwój przestrzenny, programy, instytucje [The Baltic Region, Spatial Development, Programmes, Institutions], Gdańsk 1999, p. 22

In 1994 the ministers accepted in Tallinn the strategy of the Baltic Sea spatial development. It was one of the first studies of that kind in the world that preceded similar studies made in the European Union.¹⁵

- The Tallinn report stated that *economic growth is a basic condition for promotion the rise of life standards as well as for creating new directions of social activity. The development should promote the diversity expressed through the respect for the need of an individual, nature, cultural traditions, regional peculiarity. The idea is against the uniformisation of solutions, it should strengthen regional and local identity, increase the opportunity for life style choices. Therefore the ideas of culture infiltration and protection of their more valuable „differences“ has become an integral development component.*¹⁶

The Fundamental values, accepted in VASAB2010, programme are the following:

- Development. *Economic growth is the basic condition of improving life standards and creating new fields in social activity. The growth should promote the diversity expressed in the respect for individual needs, nature, cultural traditions, regional specifics. The idea disapproves of solution uniformity, it should, however, strengthen the regional and local identity and also broaden the opportunity for lifestyle choice. Therefore the ideas of permeability of cultures and protection of their distinction become an integral component of the growth.*¹⁷
- The balance between the economic growth and the natural environment. *In Europe, where the density of population is high, social, economic and ecological policies should be earned out in such a way as to secure a balanced and reproducible growth.*
- Freedom and subsidiarity. *The ideas of freedom are able to gain the solutions wanted by people, considering the existing circumstances. The representatives of particular social groups, even at the lowest level, should have a possibility of an active participation in preparation of the decisions connected with their development.*
- Solidarity. *There exists a necessity for achieving a compromise in case of divergent opinions. The stronger should not follow up his own situation if it caused the feeling of unjustified loss.*¹⁸

¹⁵ J. Zaucha, Integracja wokół Bałtyku [Integration around the Baltic Sea]... op.cit., p.95

¹⁶ W. Toczyński (ed), Instytucje i programy współpracy bałtyckiej [Institutions and Programmes of the Baltic Co-operation], Gdańsk 1998, p.21

¹⁷ Cf.: The Tallinn Report p.75

¹⁸ W. Toczyński, W. Sartorius, J. Zaucha, op.cit., p.32

Nowadays VASAB 2010 is concentrated on implementing a common strategy of development that includes:

- the settlement network of balanced structure,
- the influence of transport corridors on regional development,
- the co-operation in sea transport, taking into consideration multimodal links,
- planning and the spatial development of the areas culturally and naturally valuable,
- the Baltic Sea yacht port network,
- transborder co-operation,
- the exchange of experience in spatial planning,
- the spatial processes monitoring.¹⁹

The joint activities aim at making the Baltic area economically, environmentally and culturally richer in comparison with the effect achieved as the result of the independent activities of particular states.

Several dozen projects are the results of the joint actions so far, including the idea of four zones of accelerated development around the important transport corridors: Tampere-Helsinki-Tallinn-Riga, TEM/TER-Scandinavia, Karelia-the Atlantic Ocean, Brest (Brześć)-Orsza, the idea of yacht port network along the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea, the project of town network in the northern part of the Gulf of Bothnia.

The VASAB 2010 programme plans include for instance:

- consolidation of town network ensuring for the region a competitive potential in economic and social sense so important in Europe as well as a harmony in spatial development,
- building efficient and environment friendly links between settlement centres and the external world,
- creating the network of protected areas of natural landscape and cultural values strengthening the dynamics of economic development and life standard. Since 1996 the seat of the VASAB Secretariat has been located in Gdańsk.

The aim of the conference of Ministers of Transport of the Baltic Sea Region is to increase effectiveness and safety in transport, promotion of proecological transport, especially the ferry and multimodal ones as well as integration of the Baltic transport networks with the European System.

The most important tasks of sea transport are the following:

- strengthening the short distance shipping in the transport system of the region,

¹⁹ J. Zaucha, Integracja wokół Bałtyku. [Integration around the Baltic Sea].. op.cit.,s.96

- improving technical condition and infrastructure modernisation of sea ports,
- co-ordinating the links of the sea ports with the infrastructure,
- improving effectiveness and service quality in the port sector,
- increasing the level of sea safety,
- developing fair and open competition in the Baltic region,
- raising environment protection norms.²⁰

The results of the conference have, unfortunately, a declarative character; they do not present any concrete organisational and programme proposals for development of further co-operation.

The objective of the conferences of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States started in 1993 in Stockholm is stimulation of cultural co-operation, the main element for forming the Baltic region identity.²¹ The joint declarations not only show the main areas of co-operation but also indicate the ways of liquidating obstacles and barriers that limit the co-operation. The conferences patronise the artistic exchange programme - *Ars Baltica*, as well as the Baltic Internet Network (BIN).

The subject of the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States in Gdańsk was protection of cultural heritage. In the accepted declaration the importance of common cultural heritage as a crucial factor of the development of democracy, peace and stabilisation in the region. The main „areas” included in the notion of cultural heritage are sea and undersea heritage, traditional building materials, wooden architecture, military architecture, as well as industrial heritage and contemporary architecture. The following joint activities aiming at the protection and further development of the heritage were proposed:

- the development of knowledge on common cultural heritage through supporting the development of tools and instruments indispensable for effective information exchange,
- the economic, legal and administrative co-ordination of the structures dealing with the protection and support of cultural heritage,
- the development of education concerning common cultural heritage,
- the instruction of craftsmen to provide them with the knowledge and abilities connected with common heritage,

²⁰ W. Toczyski (ed.), *Instytucje i programy współpracy* [Institutions and Co-operation Programmes]... op. cit, p. 25

²¹ C.E. Stllvant, *Actors around the Baltic Sea - An inventory of infrastructures: initiatives, agreements and actors*, Stockholm University, Center for Research on Nature and Environment, Stockholm 1996, s. 61

- the protection and presentation of archaeological heritage in the Baltic region,
- the development of the balanced cultural tourism.²²

The new perception of the Baltic Sea as the sea that links and creates new opportunities for co-operation made the parliaments of the states situated around the sea join the process. The meeting of the members of the Baltic States' parliaments were started in 1991 in Helsinki. They are a forum for the exchange of opinions concerning the co-operation. The Parliamentary Conference taking place in Warsaw in 1994 started the dialogue with the Baltic Sea States Council, the Baltic Sea Subregional Conference, the Association of the Baltic Chambers of Commerce, the Baltic Towns Union and other organisations. During the Lubeck Conference in 1998 the necessity of joining the European integration process with the Baltic integration was shown. The dissemination of regional co-operation on local level was also postulated. The meeting in Mariehamn in the Åland Islands in 1999 was devoted to social problems of the European Union enlargement in the Baltic Sea region and to environmental protection. A new name for the conference was accepted. Now it is the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC).

Enormous enlivening in contacts taking place in the last several years in the area of Baltic Europe has been crowned by creation of a great number of new non-governmental institutions for co-operation. The co-operation includes many different fields such as economy, transport, energetic, education, science, culture, tourism, and social care.

A gradual rank growth of the regions thanks to the increase in their role in the integration processes will allow at the same time to take full opportunity for competitiveness provided for by integrating Europe. The experience in co-operation gained so far has pointed to the two most important elements:

- seeking the international social and cultural connection,
- creating spatial unity with European structures especially in border co-operation.

The power and economic attractiveness of the united economic block of the EU countries have shown a further way for the integration in Europe. Within the European Union ways of stimulating regional co-operation have been set; they have enabled the increase in development

²² Declaration from the 4th Conference of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States, Gdańsk 20-21 September 1999

effectiveness in new forms of trade , labour migration, technical infrastructure links and building trust beyond borders.

In 1995 a dissertation „Europe 2000+“²³ was published. It presents the development of integration processes taking place in Europe, including the incorporation of Sweden and Finland to the European Union and the inclinations of the Central and East European states to join the Union activities. The most important aims according to the dissertation are:

- consolidation of decentralised, polycentric and hierarchic system of urban regions,
- formation of sufficient links of transport infrastructure between the regions, with preferences for environment friendly means of transport,
- maintenance and improvement of life standard in all parts of Europe, particularly in agglomerations, as well as the development of protected areas of big natural values,
- improvement of transborder co-operation on state and local levels, including the borders with the countries that are not EU members,
- support for decentralised political and administrative structures,
- creation of the areas dynamical and ecological development.²⁴

Cultural heritage and its protection together with the care for natural environment and landscape were included among important issues of the dissertation.

In the report the VASAB 2010 programme was presented thus underlining the importance of the Baltic Sea region in the process of European integration; its influence upon the process of forming the European space was also presented. The programme was acknowledged to be a model pattern of spatial co-operation by the EU authorities. The aims of the programme converge on the aims of the EU spatial development.

The integration processes within the EU were supported in 1997 with another report entitled „European Spatial Development Perspective“²⁵ (ESDP). It assumes the following:

- economic integration and political co-operation between the EU countries and other partners,
- an increase in importance of local and regional authorities in spatial development,

²³ „Europe 2000+. Co-operation for European Territorial Development“, European Commission, Luxembourg 1994

²⁴ W. Toczyski, W. Sartorius, J. Zaucha, Międzynarodowa współpraca regionów [International Co-operation of Regions], Warszawa 1997, p. 28.

²⁵ European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning of the European Union, Noordwijk, 9 and 10 June 1997

- the expected EU enlargement and an increase in the relations with other countries.

The basic aims of European system are the following:

- economic and social co-operation,
- balanced development,
- equalisation of competitiveness through proper spatial planning.

In the report the INTERREG IIC programme was shown as a way of international activities and strategies crossing state borders. The Baltic Sea region was included in the programme. ESDP anticipates further strategies and activities of the VASAB 2010 programme in a great deal.

The unification of Germany, regaining independence by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1991, the accession of Sweden and Finland to the EU in 1995, starting official negotiations about Poland's and Estonia's accession to EU (1998), the Lithuanian and Latvian aspiration to the accession (1999), the association of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with the European Union and the accession of Poland, (together with the Czech Republic and Hungary) to the NATO in 1999 are the evidence that the Baltic Sea is becoming gradually the inner sea of the EU. (Fig.2)

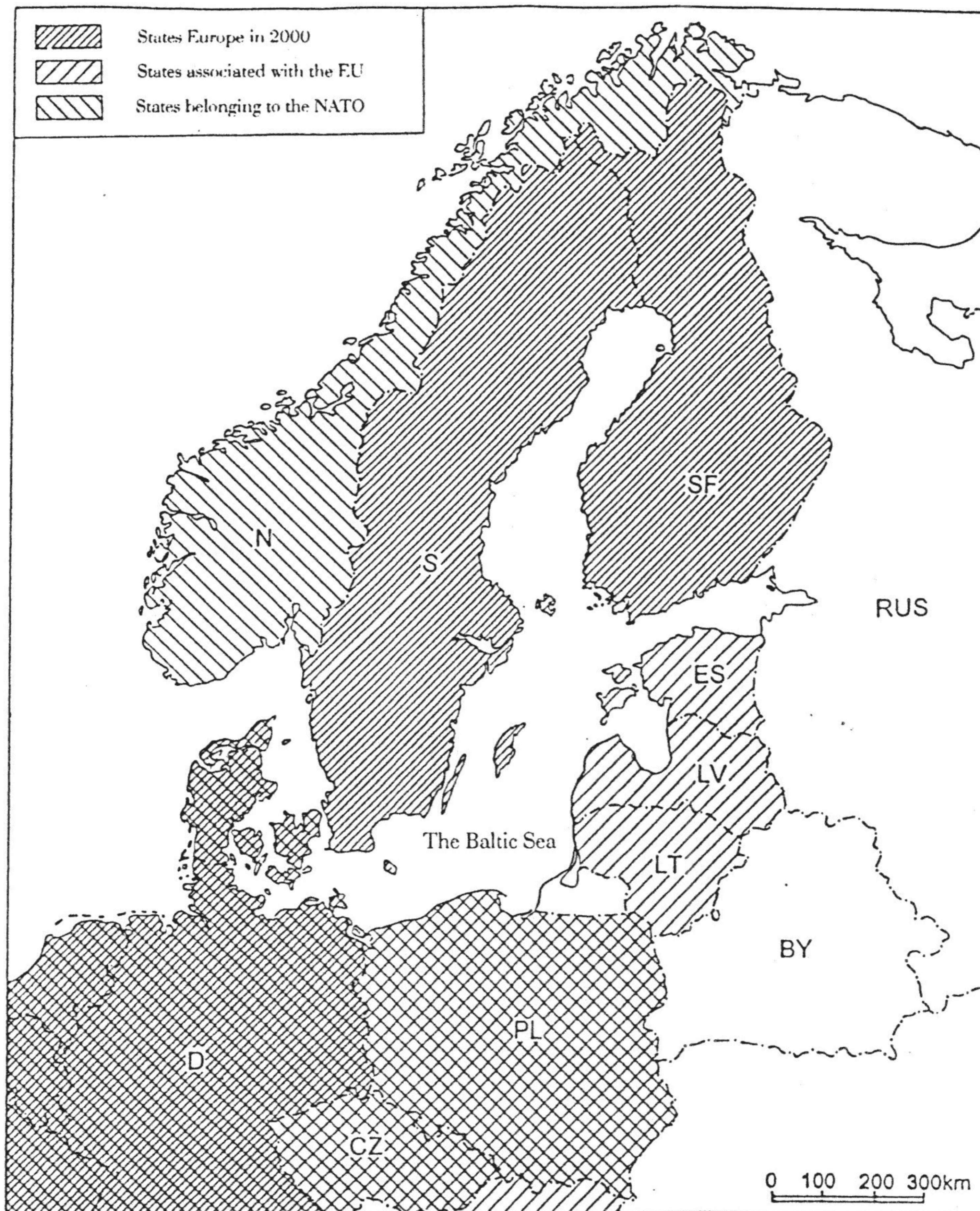
Another programme, which similarly as PHARE CBC aims at the transborder co-operation support in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe, is PHARE Credo. The programme refers to the borders of the states within PHARE aid with the regions outside the EU. In the case of Poland they are the northern (with the Kaliningrad District), eastern and southern borders. The main objective of Credo is promoting good neighbourly relations and social stability through financing projects that ensure crucial advantages for the regions and communities lying on both sides of the border.²⁶

PHARE Baltic Project Facility is the programme that is an initiative of the EU Commission. A commission of experts from the UE Baltic states and the Baltic States associated with the EU gives opinions on proposals. The programme assumes effective support for regional and local development in the Baltic area. The priorities are here meetings (partnerships), workshops, seminars of local and regional authorities in order to start the co-operation (including the transborder co-operation) and regional development, promotion of new forms of the Baltic co-operation as well as the support of innovations in the field of regional and economic co-operation.

²⁶ W. Toczyński, W. Sartorius, J. Zaucha, op., cit, p. 131

INTERREG is the biggest EU initiative supporting all land border regions in the EU member countries and some sea borders. It has existed since 1990. The INTERREG II and PHARE CBS financial aids given for the transborder co-operation in the Baltic States are used by the following Baltic countries: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia.

Fig. 2. Baltic Europe in 2000.



Source: The Author's elaboration

Since 1997 the INTERREG II C programme has been operating. In the Baltic area it supports the co-operation in spatial planning, stimulates the development of spatial structures such as communication system, settlement system, areas of spatial tourist and ecological values. The INTERREG II C projects are to, for instance, add to the balanced development (equally treating economic, social and ecological aims), promote ecodevelopment and maintenance of cultural heritage. Local and regional authorities from Poland are able to derive profits from INTERREG II C. To use the aid, Poland is to work out a project together with two partners from two different EU Baltic States. The projects should result from the strategy of the Baltic Europe development, including „VASAB 2010”.²⁷ The INTERREG II C programme has been fully included in the structures of all Baltic States what creates a good basis for the future spatial unity of Baltic Europe.

The presented programmes do not exhaust all the UE initiatives covering Baltic Europe. The initiatives aiming at the stimulation of transborder co-operation in the border-lands of the CIS countries and Central and Eastern Europe (Kaliningrad) as well as on the Russian-Finnish border (St. Petersburg) find support in the TACIS CBC programme.

The border between Finland and Russia, being at the same time the border between the EU and Russia, is nowadays the eastern border of the Baltic integration processes; it illustrates characteristic examples of the current changes. The border is about 1300 km long. In 1990 a council for Eastern Finland and the Republic of Karelia was established. Its objective was the mutual exchange of information and promotion of the territories situated on the both sides of the border that had been isolated for the last seventy years. In 1992 a co-operation agreement between Finland and the Russian Federation was concluded. In 1994 Finland and the Republic of Karelia signed a protocol concerning technical help and promotion of economic co-operation, including the trade co-operation. The foreign ministers of both countries led a specially appointed working group dealing with transborder co-operation. Northern Karelia, Kainuu, and Northern Ostrobothnia border with the Republic of Karelia, thus with Russia, on the length of about 700 km. After the opening of the border in 1990 two international border crossings Niirala-Vartsila in Northern Karelia and Vartius-Lytta in Kainuu were established, as well as several smaller ones of different legal status. The co-operation was started by the common Finnish and

²⁷ Międzynarodowa współpraca regionów. Raport uzupełniający [International Co-operation of Regions, Supplementary Report]. Warszawa 1997, p. 122

Russian project of building the Kostamuksza plant. Several initiatives and programmes help the development of the areas situated on the both sides of the border. The creation of *the Karelia Euroregion* by virtue of the agreement concluded in Joensuu in May 1998 is one of the transborder co-operation examples.²⁸ Kainuu, Northern Karelia, and Northern Ostrobothnia were included into the Euroregion from the Finnish side and the Republic of Karelia - from the side of Russia. The transborder co-operation in the area includes cultural, economic, social and ecological co-operation. (Fig. 3)

The highest decisive institution in the Euroregion is the Committee for administrative matters of the Karelia Euroregion. Within the Committee there are representatives of each side, an expert from the EU (and his deputy). The Karelia Euroregion is covered by the INTERREG and TACIS CBC programmes. The border between Finland and Russia is not considered to be the division line any longer. However, historical prejudices and their psychological consequences still divide the nations.

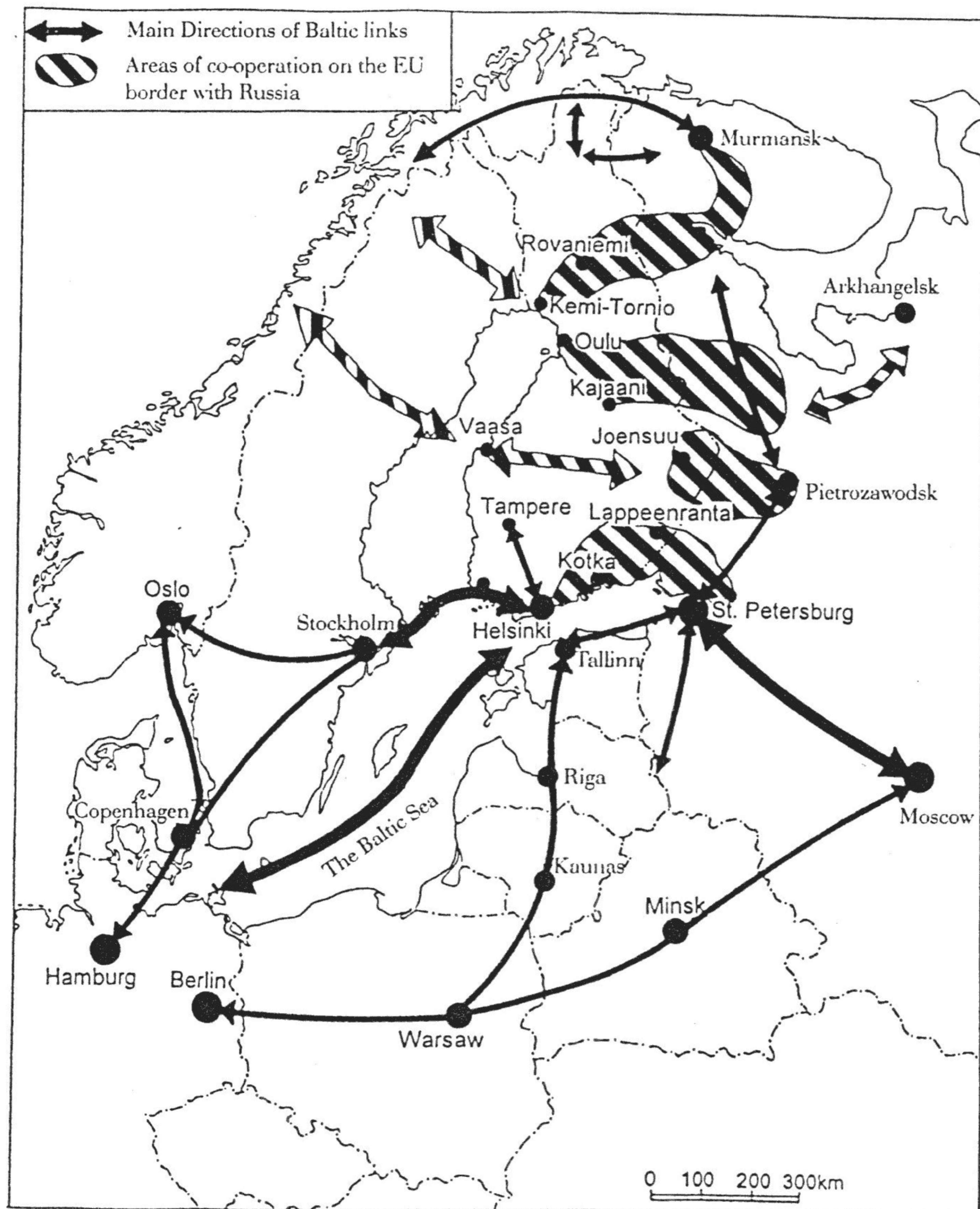
The Euroarctic Region Council was established in 1993 by a Norwegian initiative in order to include Russia into the regional co-operation. The co-operation has in view joint solution of problems in economy, environmental protection (threats connected with storage of radioactive waste, and big concentration of outdated weapons and nuclear reactors on submarine burial areas), science, culture and tourism in the region of the Kola Peninsula and the Barents Sea.

The main aims of the Baltic co-operation are activities on the behalf of the European Union extension by the interested states of the region.²⁹ Entering the programmes and EU initiatives by the Baltic States serves well to break the traditional barrier between the EU states and the aspiring countries and diminishes disproportion between European centres and peripheries. The granted financial means increase the opportunities of balanced integration and Baltic Europe creation. At the same time the regional authorities accept traditional democratic values such as freedom, subsidiarity and solidarity. Increasing identification with EU problems and successes takes place.

²⁸ T. Cronberg, *Crossing Borders in the Northern Dimension-Some Conclusions*, *Crossing Borders in the Northern Dimension*, Oulu 1999, pp.11-14

²⁹ E. Kurjata, *Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec Regionu Morza Bałtyckiego - wymiar lokalny i regionalny* [Policy of the European Union Towards the Baltic Sea Region - Local and Regional Dimension], *Zeszyty Bałtyckie*, No. 1, Szczecin 1999, p. 34.

Fig. 3. Eastern peripheries of co-operation in Baltic Europe.



Source: Spatial planning co-operation between the border regions of Finland and Russia, European Union, DGXVI.

The European Union has a positive influence on the Baltic integration processes. During the last decade the region has become an important partner in the European policy realisation. The Union finds the Baltic co-operation an important element of European safety and stability. Therefore since 1992 the representatives of the European Commission have taken

seats in the Council of the Baltic Sea States. It results in financial, substantial and organisational participation in numerous regional undertakings, in creating special programmes for the development of co-operation in the region.

The European Commission participating in the works of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC), and the Baltic Co-ordinating Committee (BCC) has recognised the Baltic Sea Region as one of its priorities.

The Committee of the Regions has especially played a crucial role in the Baltic idea promotion on the European forum (COR) since 1995. Sitting there the representatives of Denmark and Sweden make efforts to change political orientation from the southern direction (the Mediterranean Region) to the northern direction.

The European Union and the European Council, since the half of the 1990s have clearly stressed the importance of the Baltic region for European integration. They have shown a great interest in the co-operation development of the States around the sea. The idea called „The Baltic Sea as the Mediterranean Sea of the North”³⁰ finds a strong support among the Baltic states - the EU members. The aim is the reinforcement of the Baltic component in Europe through working out a separate policy towards the region and through the EU aid programmes. These would make the Baltic Sea a counterbalance in the EU to the Mediterranean.³¹

The shaped Baltic Europe may change in future the centre of gravity from the Atlantic zone and partly from the Mediterranean zone towards the Northeast. It may become an important region on the map of United Europe.

³⁰ The author of the idea is Bjorn Engholm - the Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein

³¹ J. Ruszkowski, *Geopolityczny model Europy Bałtyckiej lat 90-tych* [The Geopolitical Model of Baltic Europe in the 1990s], *Zeszyty Bałtyckie*, No.1, Szczecin 1999, p. 27

Streszczenie**Europa bałtycka i jej granice wschodnie**

W 1977 roku Jerzy Zaleski i Czesław Wojewódka dla określenia terytorium lądowego związanego gospodarczo z Bałtykiem, wprowadzili do terminologii naukowej, pojęcie Europy Bałtyckiej. Do roku 1991, obszar państw bałtyckich był bowiem polem konfrontacji dwóch systemów polityczno-gospodarczych oraz dwóch bloków militarnych

Obecnie region Europa Bałtycka - jako region i obszar powiązań administracyjnych, gospodarczych, kulturowych i infrastrukturalnych jest ciągle jeszcze pojęciem hipotetycznym. Istnieją jednak wyraźne przesłanki do jego przekształcenia w wielonarodowy regionu funkcjonalny.

Rozpoczęta w latach dziewięćdziesiątych współpraca rozwija się na wielu płaszczyznach i ma wiele wątków. Przebiega na różnych szczeblach władzy administracyjnej, w różnych sektorach gospodarczych, a także pomiędzy organizacjami pozarządowymi.

Współpracę polityczną zapoczątkowano podczas spotkania na „szczycie” premierów państw bałtyckich w Ronneby w 1990 r. W 1992 r. powołano Radę Państw Morza Bałtyckiego. Jej celem jest inicjowanie, wspieranie i promowanie współpracy przy zachowaniu bliskich kontaktów z innymi krajami i organizacjami bałtyckimi. W tym samym roku uruchomiony został program „Wizja i strategię wokół Bałtyku 2010”.

W 1995 roku ukazało się opracowanie „Europa 2000+”. Uwzględnia ono rozwój procesów integracyjnych zachodzących w Europie, w tym przyłączenie Szwecji i Finlandii do Unii Europejskiej oraz tendencje krajów Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej do włączania się w działania UE.

Od 1997 roku funkcjonuje program INTERREG II C. W obszarze bałtyckim wspiera on współpracę w dziedzinie planowania przestrzennego co stwarza dobre podwaliny przyszłej spójności przestrzennej Europy Bałtyckiej.

Wschodnią granicą bałtyckich procesów integracyjnych obrazującą charakterystyczne przykłady zachodzących przemian jest obecnie granica fińsko-rosyjska będąca jednocześnie granicą pomiędzy UE a Rosją. W 1992 roku pomiędzy Finlandią i Federacją Rosyjską zawarto umowę o współpracy. Utworzenie Euroregionu Karelia w 1998 roku stanowi jeden z przykła-

dów współpracy transgranicznej. Euroregion Karelia objęty jest programem INTERREG oraz TACIS CBC.

Głównym celem współpracy bałtyckiej jest wspólne działanie na rzecz poszerzenia Unii Europejskiej o zainteresowane kraje tego regionu. Unia Europejska i Rada Europy od połowy lat dziewięćdziesiątych wyraźnie akcentują znaczenie regionu bałtyckiego dla integracji europejskiej i wykazują duże zainteresowanie rozwojem współpracy państw wokół tego akwenu. Ukształtowana Europa Bałtycka może w przyszłości przesunąć europejski środek ciężkości ze strefy atlantyckiej i częściowo śródziemnomorskiej w kierunku północno-wschodnim, może stać się ważnym regionem na mapie Zjednoczonej Europy.