Basic information

1996/2099(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) Baltic region: initiative to inforce the regional cooperation **Subject** 4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation **Geographical area** Baltic Sea area	Procedure completed

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy	BURENSTAM LINDER Staffan (PPE)	23/07/1996

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
RELA External Economic Relations	SCHWAIGER Konrad K. (PPE)	25/07/1996

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	1903	1996-02-26

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
26/02/1996	Debate in Council		Summary
10/04/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	SEC(1996)0608	Summary
19/07/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
26/05/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
26/05/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0196/1997	
11/06/1997	Debate in Parliament		
12/06/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
30/06/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1996/2099(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/4/07919

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0196/1997 OJ C 200 30.06.1997, p. 0004	26/05/1997	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0322/1997 OJ C 200 30.06.1997, p. 0100-0166	12/06/1997	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	SEC(1996)0608	10/04/1996	Summary

Baltic region: initiative to inforce the regional cooperation

1996/2099(COS) - 26/02/1996

The Council reiterated the Union's interest in cooperation in the Baltic region. It took note of the preparations under way for the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Baltic Sea Council to be held in Visby (Sweden) on 3 and 4 May 1996. The Swedish delegation, currently holding the Presidency of the Baltic Sea Council, briefed Ministers on the topics to be discussed at the Visby Conference. The Commission briefed the Council on progress with the regional cooperation initiative which it was currently preparing in response to the call by the European Council, meeting in Madrid, which expressed the Union's interest in promoting stability and economic development in the region. The Commission would be presenting that initiative at the Visby Conference and would subsequently report back to the Europe Council in Florence.

Baltic region: initiative to inforce the regional cooperation

1996/2099(COS) - 12/06/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Staffan BURENSTAM LINDER (PPE, S) on the Baltic Sea Region Initiative, the European Parliament called for an early ratification of the Europe Agreements with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania so that the Baltic Sea might become an internal European sea and the adjoining countries, including Russia, might enhance their cooperation. In this respect, Parliament emphasized the efforts undertaken by those countries as regards political and economic cooperation and called on them to develop their cooperation further with a view to strengthening their joint position in anticipation of EU membership. The European Commission is called upon to improve the quality of the aid supplied to the Baltic States with a view to supporting their reform efforts before accession and to encourage new initiatives designed to promote stability and permanent development. Furthermore, Parliament calls for an increase in aid for those countries in the fields of education, training for the free market system and respect for the rule of law and human rights. Additional measures are also called for as regards regional infrastructure (cross-border transport, etc.), measures to combat pollution in the Baltic region and to enhance nuclear safety, particularly in Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Such aid must seek to assist reforms and support the programmes adopted in Kalmar (particularly environmental programmes). The Council is called upon to use its influence with Russia to bring about the rapid signing of the agreement between Russia and Estonia on their common borders. For its part, the European

Commission is called upon to cooperate with the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as other international organizations (OSCE, Council of Europe and the Barents Council) in order to promote stability in the region and to protect the environment. In this respect, Parliament calls for the drawing up of a list of nuclear waste in the Baltic region as a necessary first step towards protective measures. Meetings between the EP and the parliaments of the countries bordering on the Baltic should be organized with a view to strengthening political cooperation and preparing the economic integration of those countries into the Union.

Baltic region: initiative to inforce the regional cooperation

1996/2099(COS) - 10/04/1996 - Non-legislative basic document

-OBJECTIVE : The initiative set out in this document is designed to strengthen political stability and economic development in the Baltic Sea region. In particular, it proposes the intensification of the regional coordination implemented under the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and focussing on priority areas to take full advantage of existing cooperation and programmes. -SUBSTANCE : The initiative builds on the Commission's 1994 Communication entitled: 'Orientations for a Union Approach towards the Baltic Sea Region' and in its 1995 report entitled: 'Current State of and Perspectives for Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region'. The initiative,which is closely linked to the preparation of the 'Visby Charter' to be approved by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (of which the Commission is a member) is characterized by the following points: (a) enhancing democracy and political stability: the Commission intends to support enhanced cooperation within the CBSS thanks to the establishment of contacts between public and private institutions, public administration reform, the completion of projects in the area of civil society (PHARE and TACIS) and defence of human rights, improving coordination between NGOs, strengthening measures designed to defend minority rights, etc. It also intends to participate more actively in CBSS working parties set up to fight organized crime, to give early warning of environmental disasters and the development of systems for asylum to prevent illegal immigration; (b) promoting economic development: the measures to be taken by the Community in the economic sector largely form part of the pre-accession strategy. The Commission is particularly ready to support the establishment of a Baltic Free-Trade Area, the establishment of a customs union by 1998 and liberalization of trade between the three Baltic States and Poland. It also intends to assist in speeding up the approximation of regulatory frameworks and to consider the possibility of cofinancing integrated trade networks, combining infrastructure products. At the same time, substantial progress has been made in privatizing and restructuring undertakings, but measures still need to be taken in the field of privatization (financial services, SMUs, etc.). The Commission also intends to enhance coordination of international aid by systematically using Community programmes to support larger international investment projects. In particular, it proposes the preparation of a framework of assistance for the region, identifying objectives, sectors and projects to be implemented by the various members of the CBSS. That plan would leave each provider of assistance free to act but would coordinate their activities. As regards the priority aid sectors, the Commission refers to the following areas: *transport infrastructures with a series of projects to be integrated into the trans-European networks, *improvement of energy efficiency and nuclear safety: oil and gas pipeline projects crossing various countries are provided for, together with other sectoral measures, *environment, with transboundary water management projects, reduction of hazardous waste from chemicals and other forms of marine pollutants and stricter legislation on environmental protection, *tourism: principally on the eastern seaboard of the Baltic Sea; (c) developing regional cooperation and cross-border cooperation: a series of measures are provided for with a view to encouraging cooperation not only between States in the region, thanks to funds provided by the Structural Funds PHARE and TACIS for infrastructure projects, but also between regions (thanks to the INTERREG Programme) and between people by encouraging personal contacts and contacts between municipalities and cities in the region. Further projects are designed to facilitate border crossings; (d) reinforcing the role of the CBSS: given the complementarity between the work of the CBSS and the EU, the Commission takes the view that cooperation should be strengthened between those institutions and proposes to provide the Baltic Joint Programming and Monitoring Committee with a permanent secretariat which will liaise with the CBSS and make the CBSS into a form for assessing regional needs and priorities.