

**Agenda Item 11      Other business**

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**RISK ASSESSMENT AND AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE NORTH EUROPEAN GAS PIPELINE PROJECT (NEGP)**

**The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** asks the Contracting Parties to HELCOM to take note of the fact that contracts have been signed for a large building project of the North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP) from Vyborg in Russia to Greifswald in Germany.

WWF requests that the Contracting Parties take measures to safeguard the Baltic marine habitats which could be altered by the implementation of this project.

**WWF recalls** that according to the agreement between the German and Russian governments the start of the construction work for the pipeline is scheduled for 2006 which leaves a very limited time period to carry out a Risk Assessment and a necessary comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments for the project.

**WWF states** that, at present, little is known publicly about the exact route of the pipeline. Accordingly, no information is available about the impacts of the construction upon vulnerable biotopes and habitats and about functions and biological processes concerned.

**WWF stresses** that according to the scarce information available, the pipeline will, apart from Germany and Russia, possibly affect the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of at least five more Baltic Sea countries (Poland, Sweden, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland). At present not only are the environmental and biological consequences of this project unclear but also the legal implications and procedures that have to be respected.

**Recalling** HELCOM Recommendation 21 / 4 d on Protection of Heavily Endangered or Immediately Threatened Marine Biotopes in the Baltic Sea recommends to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

*d) that anyone who wishes to conduct activities which might significantly affect, destroy or damage marine or coastal areas that have not been mapped or surveyed so far, must document as part of an EIA or similar procedure the occurrence or non-occurrence of such biotopes, preferably through mapping according to the HELCOM classifications in BSEP No. 75, to the relevant authorities;*

**WWF invites** the Contracting Parties to take action in order to

- a) Secure that the Contracting Parties that conduct the pipeline project in question take all necessary measures to meet the obligations from the HELCOM Recommendation 21 /4 demanding an EIA covering all potential marine biotopes that are regarded as “Heavily Endangered” or “Immediately threatened” by “loss of area” including detailed habitat mapping for those areas where the occurrence of these habitats cannot be excluded.
- b) Secure that a Risk Assessment and a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out for the route of the North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP) according to HELCOM standards and the standards of EU law where appropriate, and urge the states conducting the project to ensure the EIA will be carried out before the final decision will be taken.
- c) Secure that the obligations of the Espoo-Convention are met for that project, in terms of exchange of information between neighbour states concerned by the project.
- d) To ask the HELCOM Secretariat to assess the legal instruments available to secure that the least damage to vulnerable marine habitats of the Baltic Sea will be caused by the planned North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP) project.