



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the fisheries control and environmental
monitoring in the Baltic Sea

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I. Introduction and main findings

1. This report is about the organisation of the fisheries control and environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea.

2. The Baltic Sea is one of the world's largest pools of brackish water with limited water exchange which makes it extremely sensitive to pollution. In recent years, pollution has been the cause of alga blooms and lack of oxygen at the bottom of the Baltic Sea which has reduced the number of animals and fish living there.

The countries bordering the Baltic Sea are, according to the Helsinki Convention, obliged to establish monitoring programmes to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea against pollution. The first Helsinki Convention was signed in 1974 and took effect in 1980. The convention was revised in 1992. All the countries bordering the Baltic Sea have acceded to the convention. Recommendation no. 19/3, which was issued in 1998 in accordance with the Helsinki Convention, concerns the marine environment monitoring programme COMBINE.

The EU Common Fisheries Policy controls fisheries through fish quotas and recovery plans for endangered fish species in the Baltic Sea. The EU's Common Fisheries Policy includes regulations governing preservation, management and exploitation of fish populations.

The purpose of the examination is to assess whether the fisheries control and environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea are organised and implemented in a satisfactory manner. The examination answers four questions:

- Is the Danish fisheries control organised in a satisfactory manner?
- Is the Danish fisheries control implemented in a satisfactory manner?
- Is the Danish environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea satisfactory?
- Have the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea organised fisheries control and environmental monitoring in a satisfactory manner.

Rigsrevisionen initiated the examination in February 2008. The examination covers the years 2005-2007.

In addition to this examination, Rigsrevisionen has also in cooperation with the supreme audit institutions of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea conducted a parallel audit. The supreme audit institutions of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Sweden participated in the parallel audit. Rigsrevisionen has coordinated the parallel audit and elaborated a joint report presenting the results of the national examinations. In this report, Rigsrevisionen will briefly comment on the results of the parallel audit.

The objective of COMBINE (Cooperative Monitoring in the Baltic Marine Environment) is to identify and quantify the impact of discharges and human activities on the Baltic Sea, and to measure the potential impact of different measures on the environmental condition of the Baltic Sea.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In Rigsrevisionen's opinion, the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea need to implement more effective control programmes and monitoring of the fisheries and the environment in the Baltic Sea. Denmark needs to implement a risk-based control strategy and develop its fisheries control systems further.

This overall assessment is based on the following:

In Rigsrevisionen's opinion, the Danish fisheries control is organised in compliance with current regulations and includes elements normally associated with risk-based control strategies. However, the data and control systems should be developed further to support the strategy.

- Rigsrevisionen finds that the organisation of the fisheries control is in compliance with current regulations and applies to both physical and administrative control measures. It also includes control campaigns targeting significant risk elements.
- In Rigsrevisionen's opinion, the Danish Directorate of Fisheries' should perform control-based control to a higher degree on pooling of data obtained from advance notifications, logbooks, sales notes, and data generated via satellite.
- Rigsrevisionen's review of the Danish Directorate of Fisheries' data and control systems shows that the systems are not yet fully developed and therefore do not fully support the fisheries control.
- Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Danish Directorate of Fisheries should develop the control strategy to ensure that risk model criteria are applied when landings/ vessels are selected for inspection.

In the years 2005-2007, the frequency of landing controls increased. Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Danish Directorate of Fisheries should cross-check data more systematically.

- Rigsrevisionen has found that the number of controls performed by Denmark in the Baltic Sea has dropped in the years 2005-2007, and the Danish Directorate of Fisheries has not met the target set for cod controls in 2007. However, a relatively larger decrease in the number of landings has compensated for the decrease in number of landing controls, and consequently the frequency of landing controls has increased in the period 2005-2007.
- Rigsrevisionen finds that the Danish surveillance vessels in the Baltic Sea only spend limited time performing their core task, which is fisheries control. The reason is that the surveillance vessels also participate in search and rescue operations at sea and must be kept ready for missions at short notice.
- Rigsrevisionen's review of the sample of 75 fishing voyages, broken down on 25 vessels, shows that many of the vessels do not comply with the EU regulations or supplementary national regulations.
- Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Danish Directorate of Fisheries should cross-check data obtained from advance notifications, logbooks, sales notes and data generated via satellite regularly.

- In Rigsrevisionen's opinion, the Danish Directorate of Fisheries has established an appropriate practice governing decisions in infringement cases which ensures that the various sanction options are applied as intended.

In the opinion of Rigsrevisionen, the Ministry of the Environment conducts the environmental surveillance of the Baltic Sea in a manner which ensures that Denmark meets with the surveillance obligations imposed by the Helsinki Convention, and elaborated in the environmental monitoring programme COMBINE.

- The Ministry of the Environment complies with the COMBINE provisions in respect of sampling frequency at the measurement stations, despite the fact that sampling frequency has decreased in 2007.
- The Ministry of the Environment has reported most of the required data on behalf of Denmark concerning the years 2005, 2006, and 2007 with a delay of two to six months. Biological data for 2005 and 2006 have not been reported yet.

On the basis of the parallel audit, Rigsrevisionen finds that there is a general need to implement more effective fisheries control and environmental monitoring systems in the Baltic Sea. Having access to valid and useful data generated by the information systems is crucial for the implementation of effective environmental monitoring and effective risk-based fisheries control.

- The participating countries have all implemented COMBINE in their national environmental monitoring programmes, but not all countries are reporting on time to HELCOM, and not all countries have submitted complete data in the period under examination.
- The countries under examination generally conduct fisheries control in compliance with current regulations in the area, but increased focus on the implementation of risk-based strategies, supported by information systems generating useful and valid data, is required.
- There are major differences between the individual countries bordering the Baltic Sea with respect to competencies, resources and control strategy. Rigsrevisionen therefore considers it important that the authorities of the individual countries continue the international cooperation on fisheries control and continue to prioritise participation in joint control activities.