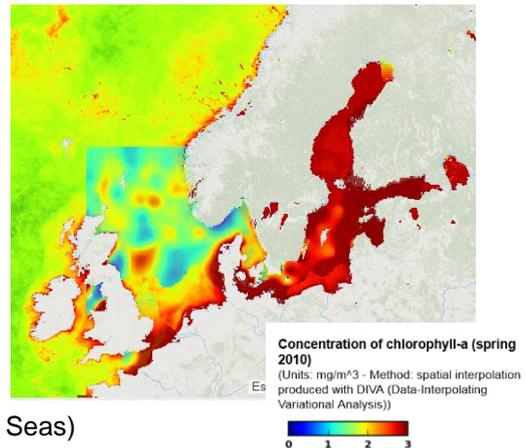


### Waste water from ships in the Baltic Sea: handling of waste water in ports and at sea

#### EU law and International Law mutually reinforcing each other

Due to human impacts from land-based and sea-based sources, but also due to its specific hydrology (slow and limited water exchange with the North Sea through the Danish Straits), the Baltic Sea is one of the most endangered regional seas in Europe.

This is particularly true for eutrophication, as demonstrated by the very high level of chlorophyll-a across all the parts of the Baltic Sea:



Map source: European Commission (European Atlas of the Seas)

The Baltic Sea is one of the busiest shipping routes of the world. Cargo, tanker, passenger and container ships are the most common ship types accounting for 80% of the traffic of International Maritime Organization (IMO) vessels in the Baltic Sea. Around 6% of these vessels are passenger ships.

Although the proportion of discharges from ships is small, when compared to other sources, wastewater discharges from ships contribute to marine pollution in the Baltic Sea in general and especially to the release of nutrients. Due to limited water exchange with adjacent seas, these nutrients have accumulated over a long time period, leading to the Baltic's current eutrophication and oxygen deficiency issues.

Due to these characteristics and based on a joint request by the Baltic Sea countries assembled in HELCOM<sup>1</sup> have successfully approached the IMO to declare the Baltic Sea a "Special Area" under the MARPOL Convention's Annex IV.

In parallel, the EU has taken steps with its area of responsibility (ports and territorial waters) to strengthen the environmental legislation framework, so that both European and International Law provision mutually reinforce each other. Whereas the EU Port Reception Facilities Directive focuses on operations in port, MARPOL mostly focuses on operations at sea. In this way, the EU Directive both aligns with and complements MARPOL, by regulating the legal, practical and financial responsibilities at the shore-sea interface. Although MARPOL provides a comprehensive framework addressing ship-source pollution from different polluting substances, it does not provide for an effective enforcement mechanism. Therefore, incorporating the main concepts and obligations of MARPOL into EU law means that they can be enforced effectively through the EU legal system.

<sup>1</sup> HELCOM = Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission ('Helsinki Commission') is the governing body of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, with Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden as Contracting Parties,.