

Youth Declaration on the Protection of the Gulf of Finland

adopted on 27 July 2014 in Helsinki (Finland)

developed by:

schoolchildren from Russia, Finland and Estonia; young leaders of the Youth Environmental Centre of SUE “Vodokanal of St. Petersburg”, the public organization “Friends of the Baltic”, Baltic Nature Fund, Ecological-Biological Centre “Krestovsky Ostrov”, Luonto-Litto and Tallinn Environment Department.

We are the youth who live on the coast of the Gulf of Finland in Russia, Finland and Estonia!

We are united by a common goal – to make possible contributions to the protection of the Gulf of Finland and involve people in taking care of the Gulf of Finland to reach balance between the nature, society and economy.

During the Gulf of Finland Year we studied the specific features of the Gulf, current problems and possible ways to solve those problems; we exchanged views and understood better what impact we produced on the Baltic Sea.

We believe that the Gulf of Finland is exposed to a high human-caused load and that all of us need to join efforts to reduce negative impacts on the environment.

We proclaim the Declaration

and call upon the youth, politicians, all decision-makers, businessmen, scientists, teachers, public organizations, farmers, fishermen, tourists, mass media and all population of the region to follow our principles and facilitate the implementation of our proposals.

Our principles:

- Individual and collective responsibility for the actions that produce impact on the environment;
- Think globally, act locally;
- Treat the nature as if it were you home;
- Foster careful attitude towards the environment among the youth from all countries.

We are ready to demonstrate by our own example how important it is:

1. To refrain from actions impairing the environment of the Baltic Region:
 - Not to leave garbage on the coast;
 - Not to slip off (dig out) rare plants;
 - Not to discharge foreign substances into water bodies;

- To use household chemicals to the smallest extent and give preference to organic analogs.
2. To make your own contribution to the improvement of the environment in the Gulf of Finland region:
- Take environmentally responsible actions, use water, energy and all resources in a rational and sustainable way in your everyday life;
 - Receive good education and turn professional in relevant areas in order to find and implement new ways of preserving the Baltic Sea.
 - Spend more time out of town near the Gulf to learn more about local environment;
 - Take the initiative and actively participate in projects and events aimed to solve the problems of the Gulf of Finland;
 - Disseminate experience and knowledge about the Gulf of Finland among friends and peer groups via the Internet and mass media;
 - Share experience in preservation of the Gulf of Finland with the youth of the neighboring countries.

We urge to join efforts to coordinate actions of all stakeholders including the youth to take well-balanced, optimal decisions for the sake of the environment of the region.

We direct our proposals to all those who may influence their implementation – politicians, local authorities, businessmen, citizens.

OUR PROPOSALS:

SOCIETY

Famous people should demonstrate careful and sustainable attitude to the environment in their everyday life and become role models for the younger generation.

Use public service announcements based on positive images and associations with the Gulf of Finland encouraging people to make their own possible contributions.

Post immediately available and useful information about environmental matters for the young people on official web-sites of municipal and state authorities; engage the youth in discussing issues related to the status of the Gulf of Finland and take into consideration the views of the youth in decision-making on different levels.

Call on people to stop overconsumption, shift to sustainable use of goods and products and give preference to the goods with environmental labelling and to the goods of those companies which use minimum packing.

Call on all people to use water, energy and other resources reasonably.

Call on people to stop using toxic chemicals, to use household chemicals sparingly and to give preference to phosphate-free detergents.

Call on people to use biological wastewater treatment processes, dry toilets and organic waste composting in private estates, summer houses and gardeners' communities.

Call on people to choose solutions with a minimal environmental impact in their everyday life - at home, in shops, at work and in transport.

INDUSTRY

We deem it necessary to:

Widely implement environmental management systems in companies;

Strive for closed production cycle and zero waste;

Pay more attention to the development of wastewater treatment technologies to be applied by industries and households;

Develop production of goods based on sustainability and cyclical economy - produce goods which serve longer, are easy to repair and recyclable;

Raise awareness of the employees with regard to the environmental impact made by their Company;

Introduce the youth to the best environmentally responsible practices in production and company management;

We consider it important to support initiatives of the companies which are open for interaction with the youth and develop environmental awareness-building projects (establishment of youth and children environmental centers, information centers, exhibitions, programmes, corporate museums, etc. to demonstrate best solutions for the environment of the region).

EDUCATION

We consider it important that educational institutions and organizations should work towards environmental management and promote eco-friendly behavior of their administration and staff;

Support the initiatives for teachers and young people in modern environmental education;

Conduct more extra-curricular activities out of town focusing attention on studying the local environment;

Support educational initiatives and public organizations' projects;

Organize open discussions of issues related to the local environment among the youth, experts and scientists.

SCIENCE

We are aware of the fact that scientists carry out a lot of research in monitoring the condition of the environment (changes in biodiversity, climate changes, water quality, etc.) and make studies aimed at the development of up-to-date green solutions.

We call on scientists to publish the results of their research in relation to the Gulf of Finland and the development of eco-friendly technologies in the Internet and popular-scientific literature in an easily understandable form oriented towards the young people and general public.

COASTAL TERRITORY

We consider it important to ensure the balance between the industrial development of the coast and the conservation of the nature.

We call for:

Development of the existing nature conservation areas and creation of new ones;

Creation of favorable conditions on the coast for migratory and nestling birds, conservation of biodiversity in general and amplification of rare plants and animals;

Establishment of properly equipped recreation spaces for population on the coast.

AGRICULTURE

We want agriculture to be more environment-friendly not to inflict harm on the Baltic Sea and not to make the eutrophication worse.

We propose to:

Restrict the use of fertilizers containing nitrites and phosphates;

Develop and support agricultural farms that use organic fertilizers;

Utilize animal waste by means of eco-friendly technologies (production of biogas, fuel briquettes, and dry fertilizers).

FISHING INDUSTRY

We announce:

No poaching! No overfishing! Let us prohibit over-trawling.

Let us use only the nets and ways of fishing permitted by the law.

Let us support small-scale fisheries (since they are more eco-friendly).

TRANSPORT

We consider it important to develop mainly public transport, especially in cities, to apply eco-friendly types of fuel, in particular, biogas, and to use only double-bottomed tankers for oil transportation.

We urge people to:

Use public transport and bicycles instead of private vehicles to reduce exhaust emissions;

Use rowboats and sailing ships instead of motor boats where possible;

Choose train instead of aircraft for short trips.

We want to be heard,

we want to be helpful!!!

The Declaration was developed in three countries with the support of the Gulf of Finland Year Coordination Center, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Nordic Council of Ministers, Tallinn Environment Department, Helsinki Environment Centre, Association of Biology and Geography Teachers of Finland and many other educational institutions of Russia, Finland and Estonia.