

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Vesa Tschernij and I'm the project leader of MARELITT Baltic. Unfortunately, even if it was a question of only a one day trip, it was completely impossible for me to find the time to travel to Berlin to be part of the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin today. We are in a crucial phase of our operational planning of the extensive sea activities this summer. I hope that this short letter can, at least partly, mediate my thoughts and emotions concerning the project and the great honor to receive this award.

I'm a fishing gear engineer by profession, with over 25 years' experience of working with fishing technological issues. I still vividly remember the very first time I heard a fisherman talk about fishing gears lost and left in the Baltic Sea. This was in September 1996. Almost 20 years have passed since then but a dream to find a solution to this dreadful problem has been one of my biggest professional ambitions. Before MARELITT Baltic, I have been part of two big international project applications that were both turned down. The last one of the disqualified applications was submitted in 2011.

Since 2011 however, there has been a rapid and clear change in the attitudes of decision makers toward derelict fishing gear. The "polluter pays principle" is being gradually replaced by a broader understanding that the fishing industry is in fact far from being the only human activity that contributes to marine pollution.

I must admit that I'm extremely proud of MARELITT Baltic. The problem we are working with is, first and most importantly, international and, secondly, very dependent on several parameters such as fishery itself, morphology, topography, water currents etc. We are lucky to have the possibility to work in both the northern, eastern and western waters of the Baltic Sea because the problem differs greatly from area to area. Thanks to these differences, we will be able to gain knowledge and make the results from MARELITT Baltic valuable not only for Baltic Sea but for other European seas as well. The solution delivered by MARELITT Baltic will be an "all-in-one" toolbox including planning, execution and analyzing tools. Our ideology is based on three principles: 1) increased knowledge and transparency, 2) developed mitigation tools including sea activities, harbor reception and recycling models and 3) of course prevention methods to minimize the problem in the future.

Today four nations; Estonia, Germany, Poland and Sweden are part of the MARELITT Baltic partnership. Finland has already announced interest in cooperation and our mission is to eventually engage the remaining four Baltic Sea countries in the work as well.

As great ambitions as we may have, and as much support as MARELITT is enjoying, MARELITT will only deliver solutions to a certain extent.

During the last years, ghost fishing has proved to be a much more complex problem than initially imagined. Lost fishing gear have been observed in fresh water environments as well as in areas with purely recreational fishing activities. In other words, derelict fishing gear are not just a commercial fishery problem.

To find a solution to this more complex problem will obviously require more knowledge and a more diversified toolbox. In other words, more work, beyond the MARELITT project, will be needed. Improved knowledge will gradually generate a change in attitude, which I believe is one of the key elements behind the final solution.

I am certain that MARELITT has the potential to help create this change in attitude. And I am absolutely convinced, that becoming the honorable winner of the Baltic Clean Maritime Award will greatly improve the abilities of our project to generate this crucial change in attitude throughout the diversified group of fishing gear users.

On behalf of my management team in Simrishamn (shown on the screen from the right; Ann-Marie Camper, marine litter expert, Camilla Witt marine biologists, myself and Madeleine Lundin (assisting project manager. policy expert) as well as all nine project partners from four countries, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great honor to receive this award.

Warm greetings from a sunny Simrishamn,

Vesa Tschernij