

Schleswig-Holstein is a pioneer in maritime affairs

Schleswig-Holstein is a prime example of just how important the seas are to Europe. Over the years, Schleswig-Holstein has promoted its naturally strong links to the sea, forging a strong maritime identity and economy, which was epitomised for centuries by its leading role in the Hanseatic League.

The interaction between man and the sea has, for thousands of years, been the source of much of Europe's wealth. From the bounty of the oceans to the increasing attractiveness of life along the coast, the seas have played a central role in the development of Europe as we know it.

Today's maritime Europe is still an impressive and important contributor to the wealth and well-being of Europeans. It covers a wide range of sectors like shipping, ship-building, conventional and renewable energy, fisheries and aquaculture, research, tourism and ports, to mention but a few. There are also a number of other sectors like aquaculture, cruise shipping, blue biotechnology and submarine telecommunications where the potential for growth is extensive. It therefore comes as no surprise to see that Schleswig-Holstein, ever at the cutting-edge of developments, is itself involved in advancing many of these sectors.

It is important to remember however, that no matter how hard we work to reap the rewards of the sea, we will never be able to sustain these rewards unless we protect the seas' fragile ecosystems. If we are to draw similar, or ever greater, benefits from the oceans and seas in the future, then there are a number of very fundamental environment challenges that must be addressed. If nothing else, the oceans and seas have a vital role to play in addressing one of our biggest challenges to date, that of climate change.

Europe must therefore pursue the double goal of maximising economic growth from the sea and safeguarding the marine environment. Science and technology are becoming ever more central to achieving this balance. In this, the EU has a head start. Our vibrant marine and maritime research communities are world leaders in many fields and have already shown their willingness to consolidate their research under an EU marine and maritime research strategy to maximise

Europe's knowledge and innovation potential.

Schleswig-Holstein will undoubtedly play a key role in this. In more ways than one, Schleswig-Holstein has proved itself to be a pioneer in maritime affairs, and has a number of examples of best practices to provide to other maritime regions.

This Maritime Yearbook of Schleswig-Holstein 2007 is yet another example of how best practices can be shared. I trust you will find its contents useful and you will enjoy the information contained therein.



Joe Borg

*Dr. Joe Borg
Member of the European Commission responsible
for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs*

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