

Development of Klaipėda port and main social and natural conflicts

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Port of Klaipėda is the only one port in Lithuania. It is Lithuanian transit center connecting the main transportation corridors between the East and West via sea routes. In order to improve its economy and to expand East-West sea trade Lithuania has to develop the port Klaipėda, maintaining its competitive ability with other Baltic ports. Klaipėda port extends on a north-south axis along a long and narrow band over 10 km in length lying mostly adjacent to the urban area of Klaipėda city. The water area of the port is a natural channel connecting Curonian lagoon and Baltic Sea. The west bank of the channel is the coast of Curonian spit and is designated as a National Park.

From the East Baltic ports in the year of 2004 the higher cargo handling was in St.Petersburgs, Primorskas(Baltiysk),Tallinn, Ventspils Ryga. Even if the existing port is fully renovated, the traffic demand would exceed the existing port capacity by around 2015 to 2017. To cope with the anticipated capacity shortage and to meet the shipping needs based on Klaipėda port being able to receive Baltmax-type vessels, Klaipėda port should be expanded beyond the existing port territory.

Klaipėda port is a very important in the economy of the country and a major influence on the life of the city, and is also in an area of considerable environmental importance and sensitivity. The key features are at first the Curonian Spit in the west, which has internationally important landscapes, culture and ecology, and is designated as National park and World Heritage Site. Then the channel between the Spit and the Port, through which commercially exploited and rare fish and internationally important birds migrate each year. Also the village of Melnragė and the Baltic coast in the north, which are used for recreation and tourism by local people and visitors.

The port is therefore surrounded on all sides by areas and features that are of local, national and international importance, which are sensitive in different ways and to varying degrees to damage and disturbance. Proposals to expand the port therefore need to be developed and implemented with a great deal of sensitivity to environmental considerations to prevent damage and disturbance to important assets.

In the south of the Port, many physical constrains exist to port expansion, including the existence of conservation areas for fresh water intakes and shortages. Conversely, the sea basin to the east of the existing sea channel and of the Melnragė beach can provide a large open space for outer port expansion. It is necessary to expand outside the existing port.

The environmental problems would be the negative impact of landscape by converting an area of natural coast used for recreation by local people into large industrial port. Also the outer-port will be visible in Melnragė, on beaches of the north, and on the Curonian Spit, an area which has been designated as a national Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its landscape beauty.

Nevertheless there would be some outer port benefits. Firstly, new port could bring, by increasing trade and government revenue, which could improve social and economic conditions throughout the country. A new port would also generate employment locally, which could improve social conditions and stimulate the economy of Klaipėda.

The main conflicts of the development sea port are: oil mining in the Baltic sea, coasts protection from erosion, deepening and cleaning, ground digging and dumping, the reconstruction of the port entrance and others.

To ensure successful development of the port it is very important define collaboration between stakeholders.

Stakeholders:

- The Government of Republic of Lithuania
- Ministry of Transport and Communications of Republic of Lithuania;
- Klaipėda State Sea Port Authority (KSSA)

Interested parts:

- Klaipėda city Municipality
- Klaipėda district Municipality
- Kursiu Nerija National Park Directorate
- Seaside regional park Directorate
- Citizens of village Melnragės
- Coastal and Curonian lagoon fishermen
- Public

Other responsible institutions:

- Ministry of Environment
- Klaipėda County head Administration
- Klaipėda public health center
- Fire safety guard Priešgaisrinė gelbėjimo tarnyba
- Culture heritage protection department

So, for successful out-port development KSSA should make efforts in preparatory works, port development project, combining city's needs and consulting with environmental organizations as well as with local community. Also the environmental procedures, recommended at EIA studies should be made. The level of environmental tools

must be concerted with a common city plan. Contacts with all EIA stakeholders and public has to be made at the early stage that all parts were informed and would participate in the process from the beginning.