

**Wywiad z ambasadorem Estonii w Polsce,
JE Martinem Rogerem, przeprowadzony w Ambasadzie
Republiki Estońskiej w Warszawie 22 maja 2019 roku
przez prof. Agnieszkę Orzelską-Stączek i dr Marzenę Czernicką⁷**

Why was the Three Seas Initiative established?

Estonia was invited to join the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). It was not a part of the initial nucleus forming the 3SI, as the initiative came from Poland and Croatia. We understand that the 3SI was established to enhance cooperation, and develop energy and transport infrastructure in the region. Currently, and for understandable reasons, infrastructure in Western Europe remains better developed than in Eastern Europe. The 3SI could give impetus to the development and improvement of north-south connectivity. That is the primary reason.

What were the goals of Estonia in joining the Three Seas Initiative?

Estonia joined the 3SI, as it was in line with its foreign policy. In this respect, as regards regional cooperation, we share the approach with the other Baltic States. The broad objective of the 3SI is to foster European Union (EU) unity and cohesion. It is also important that Germany became a partner state and that the European Commission is involved. This step has mitigated or neutralised some concerns.

As a small state, Estonia is interested in enhancing international cooperation and wants to be involved. Still, Estonia is on the periphery of the 3SI. The map defines its position in this initiative. It shows that there are states, e.g. Poland or Romania, that could benefit more and could be more interested in development of the 3SI. The stated 3SI objective is to improve connectivity in the region in the fields of transport, energy, and digitalisation. At present, we do it mainly through the EU, there is always room for improvement.

⁷ Wywiad nie był nagrywany. Został spisany z notatek przez A. Orzelską-Stączek i M. Czernicką.

The main goal of the 3SI is economic development, but there is always a political context. Maybe the goals of the 3SI will be changed, but this depends on the direction in which this initiative will develop in the future.

What are the main challenges that negatively affect the development of the Three Seas Initiative?

Significant challenges are related to the internal coordination of work on the 3SI at the member states' level. For many, the 3SI goals are within the competence of its executive branch, yet it is a forum of the heads of state.

At present, a new government has been formed in Estonia. Its position on the 3SI will be clarified in preparing for the Tallinn summit in 2020. Additionally, Estonia does not have a national financial institution or development bank that could be a natural partner to the 3SI Fund. The second challenge is the importance of understanding what the concrete modalities and outcomes of the initiative will be.

What are the main factors that positively influence the development of the Three Seas Initiative?

The 3SI gives new political impetus to the economic development of the region.

A positive factor is also the political attention of the USA in the region as well as increased cooperation and solidarity with other countries of the 3SI.

What is the impact of the creation and development of the Three Seas Initiative on the European Union (including the process of integration and disintegration of the EU)?

The EU context of the 3SI is of vital importance. Still, some more clarity will be needed in terms of how best to use the complementarity of the 3SI to our common EU membership.

The 3SI is useful in demonstrating the needs of the Central and Eastern European states, which should be addressed.

Initially, there was some incomprehensibility as to the relation between the 3SI and the EU. Now, these doubts have been dispelled, as Germany is a 3SI partner state and the European Commission has manifested its support. To sum up, we want the 3SI to strengthen the EU.

What is your perception of the Three Seas Initiative in the context of transatlantic relations (including relations with the USA)?

The USA is a catalyst for the 3SI and has given further political impetus to the format.

The US administration has been very positive about the 3SI. The USA's increased presence in the region is good for security. In terms of attractiveness for investments, in particular for the private funds that are strongly needed in the region, we will have to see.

Can you indicate a leader in the Three Seas Initiative? Which state plays this role, if any?

Poland is clearly the leading country in the 3SI. To a certain extent, Romania also plays a leading role in this forum. The Bucharest summit increased its activity. Certainly, Croatia has an important role as a co-founder of the 3SI.

Which of the projects do you consider the key to the success of the Three Seas Initiative?

It is yet to be seen. Rail Baltica is of vital importance for the Baltic States. However, it needs to be clarified what the added value of 3SI *priority projects* is to those that are also funded by the EU.

Do the Estonian authorities intend to support the Three Seas Initiative in any concrete manner? If yes, how (political dialogue, financial issues)?

We will take appropriate steps as the 3SI develops. So far, Estonia has, perhaps, not been the most active member of the 3SI. At present, as I mentioned, Estonia does not have a national financial

institution which may be a partner to the 3SI Fund. Estonia is actively taking part in political dialogue and hosting the next summit.

Is there a need for greater formal and legal regulation of Three Seas Initiative, i.e. the institutionalisation of this cooperation?

Estonia does not favour institutionalisation of the 3SI. It should remain a flexible forum. We have a relatively small civil service. We must ask what the added value of the 3SI institutionalisation would be?

What is the best term for defining the area of the Three Seas Initiative? Is it, for example, Central-Eastern Europe, Central Europe or another term?

Estonia belongs to the Nordic Baltic region, and maybe also Central and North-East Europe. I could not name the area that is covered by the 3SI as only Central Europe.