Since 2007 BalticSea2020 has been supporting Folke Rydén and Mattias Klum in the decade-long initiative Baltic Sea Media Project. The project will result in five documentaries and two nature films. The journalist Folke Rydén produces the documentary films, so far, four films has been released - "For Cod's Sake", "The second wave", "Dirty Waters" and most recently "Shipping pollution", a film about the environmental impact of shipping on the Baltic Sea. We met Folke on a cold autumn day in Åland to hear more about the film.

After making films about eutrophication, cod and chemicals Folke Rydén wanted to shed light on a problem that is not as well known in the Baltic Sea – the environmental impact of shipping.

- By tradition the oceans have been free. What happens out on the sea is not as visible as on land and therefore there has been lots of freedom to do basically anything you like when at sea. This notion has lived on in many ways, but that is about to change radically, says Folke.

The idea for the film was born out of the fact that shipping in the Baltic Sea is constantly increasing. Every day ships carry several thousand of necessities to millions of citizens around the inland sea. Folke emphasizes that shipping brings a lot of good and contributes to welfare, but it is still important to talk about the problems that it causes. The sea is also affected by the growing cruise industry, huge ships with thousands of passengers who dine and visits the restrooms, but far from all ships discharge their waste in ports.

Shipping affects the environment in two main ways: air emissions of noxious gases and emission of so-called black water and gray water. Black water is wastewater from the vessels’ toilets, gray water is waste water from shower and washing. Both air and water emissions are discussed in the documentary Shipping pollution, but toilet emissions has received the most media attention.

- About 10-15 years ago, there were no facilities in the ports to take care of black water
from large cruise liners with 3000-5000 passengers. Today there are drainage facilities in all major ports, but it takes time to empty the tanks. Ships have to schedule stops at several ports because tanks get full every 48 hours. If a cruise ship is travelling from, for example, Copenhagen to Tallinn, it has to make planned stops during the trip which costs money and takes time, says Folke.

Moreover, according to the current legislation it is permitted to empty black water in the Baltic Sea if it takes place at least 12 nautical miles from the coast.

But Folke has hope! Shipping pollution has been shown in Finland, extracts have been shown in the program Agenda in Sweden and at the end of 2015 the documentary will be shown in Norway, Latvia and Estonia. Folke believes that through knowledge dissemination to the public the policy makers will act more quickly.

"It's a little amazing that there is such power in storytelling"

- Our film has led to some measures. In Finland the ships are urged to empty their sewage in harbours. Starting from the beginning of 2016 the ships are forced to pay a so-called additional sewage fee if they drop off passengers at a Finnish port without emptying their black water, says Folke.

Even if air emissions from the shipping industry have not received as much media attention, there have been changes. Since 2015, the allowable level of sulphur emissions in the Baltic Sea area has been considerably lowered.

Folke believes that changed rules concerning the shipping industry's air emissions will be followed by an effort to enforce a ban on discharge of black water into the Baltic Sea by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). We sincerely hope so, because the Baltic Sea is such a sensitive sea and we must not treat it as a sewer!

Shipping pollution is planned to air on Swedish television in early 2016.

Links for further reading and viewing:
Watch the trailer for Shipping pollution on our website by clicking here.

Are you a teacher? The documentary Shipping pollution and related educational material are available to order at utbudet.se.

For more information about the media project, please visit www.ourbalticsea.com.

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