



Elina Kolāte,
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ELINA KOLATE is a graduate in Environmental Science at the University of Latvia. Working as a freelancer and thus being able to organize her time as she pleased while also earning a satisfactory salary, she knew that she would only have accepted a full-time job for something that she really felt interested in. So it was, about three years ago, that she received an email from a colleague, who was working at the Hydro-ecology Institute of Latvia, saying that they were looking for a manager of the Baltic Sea and Fresh Water Program. She didn't know this project, but after doing some research she understood that it was just the kind of job for which she would have conceded a change in her working life, and so she accepted the proposal. The Baltic Sea and Fresh Water Program is part of WWF Latvia, and it works in close coop-

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“I think that this is the best way to convince politicians, they are not afraid of us, but they are afraid of the fact that people could not vote for them, so if we manage to convince society, then we will manage to also convince them.”

- ELINA KOLATE

eration with all the countries bordering the Baltic Sea. One of the biggest problems they are dealing with is the phenomenon of the algal bloom. This is a plague caused by excessive use of fertilizers in agriculture, which stimulates an extreme proliferation of algae, ultimately contaminating the waters and in the worst cases making them toxic for absence of oxygen. Understandably this is a very serious problem, and even though it still hasn't affected the water coming from rivers that 50% of Latvian use for drinking, the peril is that this scenario could be nearer than expected. In fact, this is something that is currently happening in Poland, a neighboring country, which is worrying. Solving this problem is a real challenge be-

cause nobody really knows how to do it, the technology is just not advanced enough to face such a threat on a large scale – in other words, better safe than sorry. Elina's job is to create and share knowledge and awareness about this kind of topics, through constant work on research, spreading of information, and lobbying. People think the ministry that mostly deals with environmental issues is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: this is not true. The ministry that has more power and resources in this sector is the Ministry of Agriculture. Unfortunately though, the dialogue with them is almost non-existent. Apparently, they have no consideration whatsoever about civil society and environmental protection, they still seem to be living in the Soviet era, and they have no intention of working with them. This is the main obstacle in Elina's work towards the protection of fresh water reserves, since changing agricultural practices is the only way to really solve this problem.

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