

## Joint Statement from BSSSC's Day of Cities and Regions

to the EUSBSR Annual Forum, national, regional and local authorities in the Baltic Sea Region, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, and the European Union institutions

### Resolution of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), endorsed 11 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

## STRONGER REGIONS FOR A STRONGER EUROPE

Convinced that Europe can only remain strong, united, and secure if its regions are strong and empowered,

Recognising that when regions struggle, Europe as a whole feels it, and that European decisions only truly matter when they improve everyday life in our communities through jobs, services, infrastructure, and opportunities,

Emphasising that the next EU multi-annual budget (2028–2034) must treat local and regional authorities as real partners, not only in carrying out policies but in shaping them, through genuine cooperation between local, regional, national, and European levels,

Alarmed by growing demographic challenges such as ageing populations, shrinking communities, and young people leaving, which are already leading to fewer services, workforce shortages, and widening gaps between regions,

Affirming the right to stay, the simple but powerful idea that people should be able to build a good life where they feel at home, and supporting regions to adapt, including through smart shrinking, while protecting quality of life and dignity,

Acknowledging that regions at the EU's external borders carry extra responsibilities for security and cooperation and require reinforced, flexible, and long-term support mechanisms to ensure their resilience, socio-economic development, and territorial cohesion,

Concerned by the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine, the war in the Middle East, and the growing threats of disinformation, hybrid attacks, and risks to critical infrastructure, all of which directly affect our communities,

Recognising that cities and regions are on the front line supporting people, keeping services running, and protecting democratic values every day,

Reaffirming BSSSC's strong support for and commitment to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and its three core priorities – Save the Sea, Connect the Region, and Increase Prosperity –, and expressing our commitment to contributing actively to the development of the new EUSBSR Action Plan,



### BSSSC conveys the following key messages to the EUSBSR Annual Forum:

#### 1. BSSSC calls for a strong and fair EU budget

and urges that the next long-term EU budget (2028–2034) matches Europe's ambitions and clearly recognises local and regional authorities as key partners in shaping and delivering solutions;

#### 2. BSSSC underlines the importance of Cohesion Policy

and calls for it to remain at the heart of the EU budget, well-funded, easier to access, and focused on reducing regional disparities, strengthening resilience, and supporting inclusive communities;

#### 3. BSSSC calls for strong Territorial Cooperation and INTERREG

and urges increased support for cross-border cooperation and improved accessibility of programmes, given their key role in addressing shared challenges in the Baltic Sea Region;

#### 4. BSSSC promotes real multi-level governance

and calls for stronger cooperation across all levels of government, with national authorities fully respecting and involving local and regional authorities in decision-making;

#### 5. BSSSC supports a genuine place-based approach

and calls for policies that reflect the specific needs and strengths of each territory, ensuring effective solutions on the ground;

#### 6. BSSSC supports regions facing demographic decline and border pressures

and calls for targeted and stable support for regions experiencing population loss and for EU external border regions, which are disproportionately affected by demographic decline, increased security responsibilities, external threats, and reduced opportunities for cross-border cooperation, and should therefore benefit from strengthened, predictable, and tailored support to address these structural and emerging challenges;

#### 7. BSSSC empowers young people

and calls for improved access to EU programmes and meaningful participation of young people in shaping their communities, policy, and Europe's future;

**8. BSSSC deepens partnership with Ukraine** and calls for continued and strengthened cooperation based on solidarity, supporting Ukraine during the war and in its recovery and reconstruction.

BSSSC calls for stronger cooperation across all levels of governance to ensure that policies truly respond to people's needs.

BSSSC affirms that Europe's strength is built locally. When people can stay, feel heard, and see a future in their communities, Europe becomes more united, resilient, and secure.