



BSSSC Annual Conference Resolution 2024

The 32nd BSSSC Annual Conference under the headline „*Let’s fight for resilient and safe communities in the Baltic Sea Region*“ convened on September 19th and 20th 2024 in Kiel, Germany, under the chairmanship of Schleswig-Holstein.

Facing politically challenging times, cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is more crucial than ever. Together, we explored ways to strengthen our societies, democracies and economies.

BSSSC continues to condemn Russian actions of invasion and violence in Ukraine and calls for action to support Ukrainian actors in all BSR organisations and networks.

BSSSC will, in the light of the prevailing geopolitical circumstances, intensify its interaction and communication with other organisations and networks in the BSR.

BSSSC calls on all actors in the BSR to support measures for more participatory citizen involvement in BSR policy-making and to consider re-activating the BSR NGO Forum as a regular potentially bi-annual event.

BSSSC notes with interest the outcome of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Ministerial Meeting in Porvoo, Finland on June 13/14th. BSSSC underlines the important role of CBSS as a forum for political dialogue and calls for a meeting between the BSR heads of government in 2025.

BSSSC supports the conclusions of the 33rd Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) in Helsingør Denmark on August 27th, which emphasize the need for deeper cooperation and solidarity between the democratic Baltic Sea states. The conclusions reaffirm support for Ukraine, condemn the Russian invasion and call for increased efforts in the areas of security, environmental protection and economic development. They also emphasize the importance of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as the need to combat climate change and strengthen digital cooperation.

BSSSC calls for consideration and support in implementation of key topics discussed at the BSSSC Annual Conference on a transnational scale.

- 1. With regard to security and protection of democracy and common values**
BSSSC emphasises the power of Baltic Sea cooperation as a trust and peacebuilding measure. Security is the key tool to our well-being as societies around the Baltic Sea. Political events in the Baltic Sea Region are shaped not only by direct military threats from the Russian regime but also by challenges to our



energy security. Additionally, our trade and economic relations are endangered by sabotage, as well as by targeted influence of societies through disinformation and cyberattacks.

BSSSC therefore highly welcomes the increase in military security in the Baltic Sea region by the admission of Finland and Sweden to NATO in 2023 and 2024.

- 2. With regard to fighting for Democracy and combatting fake news and disinformation,** BSSSC points out that the disinformation spread mainly by authoritarian actors needs to be considered a threat to our democracy. The legal possibilities to combat disinformation, such as the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), need to be utilized and strengthened. Furthermore, BSSSC urges the EU institutions to step up concerning the regulation of social media platforms more effectively. Each individual is also called upon to critically analyse content on social media before disseminating it.
- 3. With regard to Cooperation with Ukraine, BSSSC calls for further action and boosts** joint initiatives focusing on sustainability, innovation, and education to promote inclusive development. BSSSC is enhancing security cooperation and strategic partnerships to bolster regional stability. With its Ukraine project, BSSSC lays the ground for investments in Ukrainian infrastructure and development projects to aid economic recovery and growth. Facilitation of dialogue and sharing expertise in renewable energy and digital transformation to support Ukraine's modernization efforts are key issues for further cooperation with the aim of developing a long-term strategic partnership that fosters peace, security, and mutual economic growth.
- 4. With regard to Cohesion Policy post 2027, BSSSC believes that** all regions of the EU should continue to receive support within the framework of the EU's Regional Policy. BSSSC urges the EU institutions to secure the continuation of Cohesion Policy after 2027 as a long-term, integrated, place-based investment policy under shared management with adequate funding. BSSSC underlines the important role of the Interreg Programmes (all three strands) in supporting regional cooperation, experimentation and the development of new approaches on a wide range of topics of regional importance as well as the crucial support for the implementation of macro-regional strategies. BSSSC demands that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should be further strengthened, also with regard to rebuilding Ukraine.
- 5. With regard to Interreg Baltic Sea Region, the BSSSC calls on the European Commission** to make a legislative proposal to maintain and strengthen this programme beyond 2027 as a place-based funding instrument to address common territorial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region, including those prioritised by the



EUSBSR. Furthermore, the BSSSC calls on the regions in the Baltic Sea Region to make the best use of Interreg Baltic Sea Region by initiating projects on common development opportunities and challenges, and by ensuring the transfer of transnational project results into regional policies as well as promoting the capitalisation of project results in project platforms.

6. **With regard to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**, BSSSC emphasizes the important role of regional and local authorities in developing and implementing the next EUSBSR Action Plan in 2025. BSSSC therefore will take an active role at the Participation Day of the EUSBSR Annual Forum in October in Visby/SE to discuss involvement of BSR organizations and networks in the development of the EUSBSR Action Plan for the upcoming years. BSSSC also welcomes and supports the signals from Norway to become an active member of the EUSBSR.
7. **With regard to youth involvement, BSSSC continues to emphasize and demonstrate** by its activities the importance of meaningful youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It is an investment in our peaceful and sustainable future and empowers young region-builders to participate in policy-making across diverse topics. BSSSC calls on countries and regions to secure a budget in their respective institutions and funding programmes and tools to operationalize and safeguard youth engagement on a long-term sustainable and reliable basis.
8. **With regard to Artificial Intelligence, BSSSC promotes and supports** the possibilities for meaningful AI-driven innovations in the public sector. Challenges with AI deployment in the public sector can be overcome and opportunities exploited by sharing regional experiences and best practice examples. Increasing investment in AI education and training programs will contribute to build a skilled workforce, capable of developing, managing, and utilizing AI technologies in the public sector.
9. **With regard to building resilient communities with Culture/Baltic Sea Cultural Pearls BSSSC calls** on BSR organizations, funders and networks to support the continuation and institutionalisation of the ongoing Interreg project Baltic Sea Cultural Pearls, making the award and the respective supporting programme for the awarded cities a recurring, sustainable tool for dynamic, thriving and resilient communities.
10. **With regard to Clearance of dumped munition, BSSSC urges** BSR governments to move from research and monitoring to action. Environmentally friendly solutions to salvage dumped munitions need to be developed and utilized as soon as possible in order to eliminate the ticking clock for our common Baltic Sea habitat. In addition, the development of environmentally compatible disposal methods for non-



salvageable munitions should be promoted in close exchange and cooperation between industry and state actors across borders in order to make the Baltic Sea region a pilot region on the way to munitions-free seas.

- 11. With regard to Offshore Wind in the BSR, BSSSC urges** the BSR regions and national governments to speed up the energy transformation in order to achieve ambitious EU goals related to the implementation of the Green Deal. The implementation of individual policies needs to be fully coordinated and should be more focused on offshore renewable energy and its potential for synergies and interpenetration. The massive expansion of offshore wind energy is however, one of the key sectors with high potential. It is crucial for the Baltic Sea Region to focus on building long-lasting foundations for energy independence, educational and market transformations. Actions taken so far in individual regions are insufficient. Greater mobilization and coordination is needed. BSSSC emphasizes the need of minimizing the ecological impact of offshore wind farms to secure the protection of the Baltic Sea ecosystem.
- 12. With regard to boosting the uptake of hydrogen, the BSSSC calls** on BSR organizations to actively promote and support the acceleration of green hydrogen infrastructure, particularly in the transport sector, through robust policy measures. Enhanced cross-border industry cooperation will enable better addressing of the challenges and opportunities associated with hydrogen infrastructure implementation. Facilitating knowledge sharing and transfer of best practices across the renewable energy value chain to support the uptake of hydrogen is crucial. These efforts aim to develop a long-term partnership within the region, fostering the green transition, economic growth and mobility opportunities.
- 13. With regard to sustainable transport, BSSSC calls on the EU institutions and** Member States to allocate more funding for the Connecting Europe Facility instrument in the next Multiannual Financial Framework from 2028 and urges all stakeholders to intensify the efforts for climate proofing of transport infrastructure. Furthermore, BSSSC would like to see the introduction of European regulations, which could facilitate travel planning, ticketing and ensure passenger rights for rail journeys across borders. Freight and passengers must be able to move seamlessly across borders with the most climate-friendly modes of transport, such as rail. Urban nodes are crucial for enhancing the performance of multimodal networks, and EU support is needed to further expand alternative fuel distribution, particularly in road transport.
Furthermore, BSSSC calls for reducing transport bottlenecks in the Baltic Sea region in order to increase the military mobility in view of the current geopolitical instability.