



Baltic Sea States
Subregional
Co-operation

DECLARATION

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It is to believe that a rising complexity of the EU following from enlargement will bring about more horizontal initiatives from mega regions, when now moving from negotiations of the *acquis communautaire* into an implementation phase.

An enlarged Europe forming the external borders to Norway and Russia stresses further the importance of good neighbourhood relations. Relations with Kaliningrad as well as with North West Russian regions must have high priority.

The Northern Dimension initiative provides a broad framework for a common effort to develop the societies and the economies of the countries in northern Europe. It is not possible to implement the second Northern Dimension action plan (2004-2006) without the active involvement and contribution of regional actors and their co-operation networks.

This development will increase the need for an effective public sector providing public services to the citizens, and the need of human resources capacity which points to the fact that competences must be shared rather than separated.

It is also to believe that the complexity of the Union will increase the need of the European Commission for representative organisations with a high level of legitimacy and representativity.

There has been an increased focus on regions in a European and EU context during recent years. The EU is not only a Europe of nations but also to a large extent a Europe of regions, a development that will be increased by the enlargement of the European Union. And the Baltic Sea region is and will still be an important mega-region in Europe.

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2

Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) was established in 1993 based on the Stavanger declaration, and as an answer to the establishment of CBSS (Council of Baltic Sea States) in 1992.

After 10 years and due to the changes and challenges of the Baltic Sea Region, BSSSC must reconsider its political objectives and its strategy.

The concept of the Northern Dimension and different neighbourhood programmes further stresses the aspect of cohesion in the Region, and the sub-regions hold, through their co-operation projects, a main key to peace, quality of life and prosperity.

In order to meet the demands of tomorrow BSSSC will concentrate on the following:

- act as a Pan-Baltic organisation open to all regions from the entire Baltic Sea area, bringing added value to the Baltic Sea regional co-operation,
- use its image as a political organisation and a regional partner to CBSS to promote and advocate the interests of the regions of the Baltic Sea area towards decision makers, such as national governments, the EU and globally, and
- provide expertise, best practice examples and implementation capacity.