



29 January 2005

## **BSSSC work plan 2005-2006**

### ***Introduction***

The BSSSC has existed for more than a decade. During those years the Baltic Sea Region has undergone significant changes. In 2004 several important events took place: The accession of new member states to the European Union is finished. A new European Parliament has started to work. A new European Commission has been appointed. Adaptation of a new constitutional Treaty for the Union is under way and preparations for new political guidelines and financial perspectives for the coming years are being elaborated.

The Baltic Sea Region as well as the rest of Europe is now facing new challenges. New relations across the new internal and external EU-borders must be developed to insure a prosperous, democratic, peaceful and sustainable development in this part of Europe.

The Baltic Sea Region after the EU enlargement will be one of the keys mega-regions in Europe characterised by dynamic economic development and co-operation. The regions around the Baltic Sea have great possibilities of improving the quality of life for their citizens. However, there are many challenges to be dealt with and threats that must be overcome to secure such a positive development.

It is necessary to strengthen and develop sub-national competence and Baltic Sea Region co-operation. The aim shall be to support and promote a good quality of life, democracy and a sustainable development.

### **1: General position of the BSSSC**

The BSSSC wants to meet the expectations and challenges brought by:

- ❑ the enlargement of the European Union 2004;
- ❑ the importance of Northern Europe as described in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Northern Dimension Action Plan;
- ❑ the administrative reforms planned or underway in the Baltic Sea Region countries with a special focus on the role, competence and resources at the regional level;
- ❑ the reform of the main EU policies in progress and especially the cohesion and neighbourhood policy for the years 2007-2013;
- ❑ the demands created by the process of globalisation and those resulting from the Gothenburg Agenda and the Lisbon Strategy.

The BSSSC identifies as overall issues of importance to be addressed by the BSSSC:

- ❑ To propagate the importance of the regions in the Baltic Sea Region, in close co-operation with the national governments, the European Union and policy formulating regional organisations in Europe.
- ❑ To influence the nations in the BSR and the EU institutions to recognise the importance of the regions when national and European policy in the BSR is formulated and implemented.
- ❑ To work for co-ordination of different EU policies and support to the Baltic Sea Region and for co-ordination of those and corresponding national policies;
- ❑ To develop the Northern Dimension to a platform for democracy and effective regional institutions in the Baltic Sea States.

## **2: The BSSSC shall in order to realize its position:**

- Pronounce its role as a political network and speaker for the regions in the 10 nations around the Baltic Sea.
- Establish its co-operation on common interests and with acceptance of the differences that exists between nations and regions.
- Continue to develop the constructive co-operation with other sub-national organisations in the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic Sea Region) to reinforce political strength, gather competence and avoid double work.
- Improve the good relations with the national authorities around the Baltic Sea, represented by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and with European institutions, foremost the EU-commission and the Committee of the Regions - CoR.
- Work for the regions in all parts of the BSR, among others within the frame of the European Unions' policies and with a special focus on the Northern Dimension and its actual action plan.
- Support the development of democratic and effective institutions on the sub-national level around the Baltic Sea.
- Promote co-operation and contacts with Russian and Belarusian neighbouring regions with special attention on Kaliningrad Oblast.

## **3: The powers of BSSSC**

The BSSSC is a Network organisation and has limited administrative and economical resources. The BSSSC consists of a board, a chairman, appointed ad-hoc working groups and a small secretariat. The budget is sufficient for administration of the board and its activities only.

Therefore, the BSSSC must work mainly through its board members, their resources at home and other organisations and actors. This is done by formulating positions and presenting those to relevant authorities. The positions of the BSSSC can be formulated and proposed to the board by the ad-hoc working groups, by reporters appointed by the board or by the BSSSC secretariat.

The BSSSC can also initiate conferences, seminars and political meetings promoting important topics for the regions in the Baltic Sea Region, or being represented at such events.

### **3.1: Co-operation and Co-ordination**

The BSSSC will work in close connection to other policy formulating Baltic Sea organisations in order to gather mutual political strength in various positions and to avoid duplication of work. This aim and ambition will be realised by the intensified change of information and concrete co-operation between the different Baltic Sea Organisations. Important themes are vision and strategies, priorities, results of work in internal workgroups and position papers to be formulated.

The BSSSC Working Groups shall as far as possible seek cooperation with other Baltic Sea and European regional organisations dealing with the same theme as the Working Group.

The BSSSC Annual Conference shall be developed to an important meeting place for all the different sub-national Baltic Sea Organisations, as was the vision of the founders of BSSSC.

## **4: Policy areas 2005-2006**

During 2005-2006, the work of the BSSSC will be based on the results of previous work done by BSSSC, and especially on the outcomes of the 2004 Annual Conference in Malmö. The following policy areas for BSSSC are identified.

#### **4.1: Economic Development**

The BSSSC recognises the need to create an environment for business and economic growth throughout the BSR in which trade and investments are able to develop and thrive. Sustainable economic development is necessary to secure full employment and a good quality of life in the regions. The BSSSC welcomes the initiatives already taken by Baltic Sea nations and the European Union to secure the base of economic development in the region.

BSSSC shall:

Actively support the "*Baltic Sea Initiative 2010*," launched by the Baltic Development Forum (BDF)

Actively support the project "*3T – Triple Trade in Ten Years*", launched by the Baltic Chamber of Commerce Association (BCCA) in

Support the awareness and implementation of the Lisbon Agenda on the regional level in the BSR.

#### **4.2: Territorial cohesion, transport infrastructure and environment**

Those three policy areas are closely connected and in many ways interdependent.

##### **Territorial Cohesion**

Within the European Union, there will be intensive work to establish and realise the Cohesion Policy and the Structural Funds for the year 2007-2013. These policies will be of outmost importance to the BSR as a whole and to its regions.

Central themes are the co-ordination between EU cohesion and national policies, EU sector policies, and between those and corresponding sectors in the national policies. The design of the successor to INTERREG III and its application in the Baltic Sea Region will be very important as a tool for co-operation between regions in old and new member states and between those and Norway. Equally important will be the practical application of the EU-initiative "Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood."

The BSSSC shall take part in the dialog and development of transnational co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013. The BSSSC shall address themes such as regional demands on the new policies, necessary conditions for effective co-operation between EU-members, Norway, Russia and Belarus, and terms for co-operation across maritime borders.

##### **Transport Infrastructure**

Land, sea and air transport in the BSR have increased enormously in the last decades. A desirable increased economical and cultural integration within the BSR requires sustainable and effective systems for the transport infrastructure. This is necessary also to connect BSR to the European markets, The Russian Federation and Belarus, and to support the regions potential to serve trading routes of global importance.

Intensive work is already going on in the BSR to develop and find solutions for the transport infrastructure, for instance within the BSR INTERREG III B Programme and the work done by VASAB.

BSSSC will support and if necessary initiate co-operation and continued dialogue with the aim of establishing a common transport vision and a joint spatial development perspective for the Baltic Sea Region. The BSSSC stresses the importance of the regions to function as bridges between local, national and European levels.

The BSSSC Board shall support the conclusions drawn by the Workshop on Transport and Infrastructure performed at the 12 Annual Conference.

Referring to the revision of "Transeuropean Networks: Transport" (April 2004), the new idea of "Motorways of the Sea" as well as to the recent Commission Communication on "Short Sea

Shipping” (July 2004) the BSSSC will call on the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) to prepare and arrange a Baltic Sea Transport Conference aiming at enhanced co-ordination of Baltic Sea interests in multi-modal terms. Fixed links as well as enhanced sea transport means shall be incorporated.

#### **Environment and sustainable development**

The Baltic Sea Region and its air, land and maritime environment are thoroughly penetrated by the work done within the framework of Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic 21) and by the HELCOM organisation. BSSSC will explore options, develop solutions and support implementation for sustainable development at the sub-regional level in the context of Baltic 21 implementation. Of foremost importance there is the development of a lighthouse project in co-operation with other relevant Baltic Sea Region organisations.

A new important focus is on sustainable urban development and the connection between urban centres and the surrounding region. The urban centres are normally motors for the development of a region. Sustainable urban development is in coherence with the environmental priorities made by the European Union. However, sustainability can only be achieved when focusing on the city and on the surrounding region as an interconnected unit. The theme is of current interest and of great importance considering the transition going on in the BSR, from rural to an urban society.

#### **4.3: Maritime Future and Maritime Safety**

The Baltic Sea is a fragile environment on which we all heavily depend, not only as an area for transportation but also as an area for production of food and for recreation.

The Baltic Sea is one of the busiest shipping areas in the world. All predictions are pointing at an increased maritime traffic. At any given time, very large vessels are sailing the Baltic Sea, many of which are carrying hazardous cargo such as oil, chemicals and nuclear waste.

Compared to other means of transportation, maritime traffic is environmentally friendly — if there are no accidents.

BSSSC will actively promote the increased use of the sea routes, but measures must be taken to make them safe and minimise risks of damage.

BSSSC will underline that the urgent need for co-operation and co-ordination in the Baltic Sea Region. Achieving this BSSSC will support the initiative “Maritime Future”, launched by Land Schleswig-Holstein and initiate co-operation with other organisations in the Baltic Sea Region working with maritime issues.

#### **4.4: Civil security and Crime Prevention**

The BSR is a dynamic area of changes; the majority are positive, but in some cases improvements are needed. An area of importance is the increasing problems of trans-border criminality in a broad sense. Organised crime in all forms has to be fought against on every level of society, individually and jointly.

One of the most revolting is commonly named trafficking. This is a serious problem, and there is an urgent need to strengthen the awareness and to increase international co-operation against it.

BSSSC shall support all regional and national initiatives to strengthen civil security and crime prevention.

BSSSC will act as a frame and facilitator for these activities. The Schleswig-Holstein member will do reports to the BSSSC Board.

#### **4.5: Society in transition and quality of life**

Sustainable development can be seen as a quality that emerges from the interaction between

complex and mutually dependent societal, cultural, economic and ecological systems. To create welfare, from a sustainable point of view, social systems must strengthen the economic development and environmental policies must be cost-effective. Therefore, traditional planning should include effects on public health and social well-being. The business sector needs to stress the ethic, social, and environmental values. Social structures such as demography must be considered.

Strong individuals inhabit a strong region. Successful integration depends on the involvement of the citizens. The need for more institutional interaction in the BSR needs to be followed by the intensified co-operation people-to-people. The people-to-people co-operation involves many aspects such as workforce mobility, student exchange, youth exchange, culture, sport, tourism, and exchange of information and experiences. The exchange of experience will increase the competitiveness of the region as a whole. This will strengthen the position as one of the main areas of growth in Europe.

The history of the BSR is of interest for interregional co-operation. The regions show many similarities in their cultural heritage, which can serve as a base for exchange and development. This is likely to be of increasing importance with tourism, but also as an important factor for small enterprises and business co-operation. Intercultural learning and acceptance must be an important part of the co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region.

The cultural, institutional and language differences in the BSR should be looked upon as a comparative advantage and not as an obstacle. The dynamic of differences creates many opportunities.

#### **4.6 Youth Policy**

The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at the local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC fully recognises and supports the increasing participation of young people in the concrete work of the organisation. To develop and strengthen the youth perspective and youth policy within its organisation BSSSC will:

Continue to put focus on youth participation and involvement of young people at the annual conferences