

BSSSC 27th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

18 – 20 SEPTEMBER 2019 IN KLAIPEDA, LITHUANIA

OPENING – CHAIRMAN OF BSSSC, ROGER RYBERG

Chairman of Association of Klaipeda Region,
Ambassadors, distinguish guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure – but also with a hint of sadness - that I address the BSSSC Annual Conference here today. I remember back in 2016 - in Hämeenlinna – when I presented the incoming Chairmanship of Eastern Norway County Network. Time flies! Now we are gathered here in lovely Klaipeda on the shores of the Baltic Sea - and it is already 2019.

However, we have come a long way during these three years and we have accomplished a lot together.

My priorities - as Chairman - have from the start been:

- YOUTH INVOLVEMENT,
- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT and
- BETTER COMMUNICATION to tell the world around us about BSSSC and our work - and to attract more interest to BSSSC

Summing up the work done and the results – I am proud to say that we have achieved a lot! BSSSC has been instrumental to lift the voice of the youth in the BSR. Special thanks to the hard work of our youth Board members 2017 to 2019 – Kari, Timo, Martin and Agnes.

The Baltic Sea Youth Camp arranged in Gdansk in June this year - with more than 100 young people from all over the Baltic Sea region – and the initiative of a Baltic Sea Youth Platform under the umbrella of CBSS - are lighthouses for this work.

In addition we have promoted youth involvement under the headline “Nothing about us without us” at the EUSBSR Annual Fora in Stockholm, Berlin, Tallinn and last but not least in Gdansk in June this year. Our good cooperation with the Union of Baltic Cities and the EuroRegion Baltic has made all this possible – as well as the great support from CBSS Secretariat. A big thank you to you all!

I hope this good work will continue and grow and I assure you that we will support this from Norway in the future.

BSSSC was partner in this year’s Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Together with our colleagues in Pomorskie Region - we focused on Circular and Sharing economy as drivers for change in the BSR.

“Reduce – Reuse – Rethink” was the conference slogan!

The Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals have been on the BSSSC agenda the past years. We have participated actively in the preparation and promotion of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan in close cooperation with CBSS. We have taken part in Helcom meetings and given our input to the Baltic Sea Action Plan of Helcom.

As part of our participation in the Annual Forum in Gdansk – we produced a best practise report on circular economy in the Baltic Sea and beyond. To fuel the processes transforming our societies into a greener and more sustainable future.

In May, we agreed on a policy paper on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Future of Europe – and forwarded our positions to the European Commission and other EU institutions - as well as to the CBSS Foreign Ministers' meeting in Jurmala in June.

Future of Cohesion Policy and programmes has been another very important area for BSSSC over the past years. We have lobbied the interest of the regions and municipalities through policy papers and meetings with EU institutions. Yesterday the Board adopted a third paper on Cohesion Policy – this time focusing on the new proposal of an instrument to support interregional innovation investments. The future of INTERREG has been at our heart – with inclusion of Russia and Norway into the BSR framework and programmes.

Through Annual Conferences and the work of the Board, we have promoted togetherness, solidarity, democracy, cultural understanding, subsidiarity and good neighbourhood relations – as key values that we need to build our work on.

We have focused on smart solution and shared knowledge and good practises on Bio-economy, sustainable procurements, cultural innovations, maritime policy and green transport and accessibility.

The state of the Oceans - and the interrelation between clean and healthy Oceans, sustainable use of Ocean resources and economic growth are today high on the European as well as the Global agenda.

At this Annual Conference, we focus on sustainable maritime economy – in all its aspects – and on how we as regions can be active in shaping the future of our Baltic Sea Region.

The future will be both green and blue – and both environment and economy will play a crucial role. The choices we make now will affect the Sea and its inhabitants.

We have to be clever in our policymaking - and base our decisions on knowledge and research - as well as common sense. And, as one of my mantras in the past years – WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER – cross sectors, cross levels of governance, cross political differences and not at least - cross generations.

As politicians, we have to cooperate with the industry and private sector initiative. To give directions and framework for development - and to fuel good ideas and initiatives promoting a sustainable maritime economy. Today we highlight maritime projects through six thematic parallel sessions.

BSSSC will like to be a facilitator for better dialog between public and private sector - to support exchange of good practises and creation of partnerships for future

projects. From 2021, new money will (hopefully) be available for project cooperation from Interreg and other EU-funding programmes.

I hope you will have interesting days today and tomorrow here in Klaipeda - and travel back home with new knowledge and ideas as well as new friends in your luggage.

By this, I declare the 27 BSSSC Annual Conference 2019 for opened

BELL!