



BSSSC Resolution

of the 19th Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) in Szczecin, Westpomeranian Region, 5-7th October 2011

The BSSSC Board has agreed on the following resolution:

I BSSSC Annual Conference 2011

The role of the regions in making Europe the most dynamic, innovative and sustainable area of the world is increasingly being appreciated. The BSSSC Annual Conference 2011 reflects this development in regard to the Baltic Sea Region.

The BSSSC Conference 2011 has focused on two main topics which are important factors of sustainable growth in the Baltic Sea Region and are closely related to each other. One of them is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The official consultation process for the Strategy was launched by the European Commission at the BSSSC Annual Conference in Kaunas in September 2008, where the first of four roundtables took place. The first Annual Forum of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy was organized back-to-back with the BSSSC's Annual Conference in Tallinn in October 2010. The conference in Szczecin 2011 is a subsequent opportunity for the BSR regions to debate and formulate their demands concerning the implementation process of the Strategy. The results of Szczecin's debate, concluded in this resolution, will be submitted to the European Commission and the Polish Presidency in the European Council. At present Europe is undergoing a difficult time of economical and financial crisis which affects both its policies and societies. The debates which are currently underway shall give a response to the current problems of the European community, but what is most important is to describe a vision that Europe wants to achieve by 2020. The cohesion policy has a profound role to play in this respect. This policy does not only diminish the negative effects of the crises felt by citizens but it also ensures the continuity of long-term development objectives and stimulates necessary structural changes.

The conference comes at a particular moment - the new shape of EU policies is being currently negotiated by the Council and the European Parliament. The Polish Presidency began these negotiations with the motto - "Cohesion Policy as an efficient, effective and territorially differentiated response to EU development challenges". The BSSSC Annual Conference presents the voice of the Baltic Sea Regions in this debate.

The BSSSC -

1. calls for taking the results of the conference into account during the review process of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The results should also be taken into account in the debate on the future cohesion policy during the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and at the European Commission's 2nd Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, co-organised by the Polish EU-Presidency.

II The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The BSSSC -

2. appreciates the fact that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has put renewed focus on the BSR – with Europe wide interest – and this has encouraged regional cooperation. With the Strategy, the main challenges and opportunities of the Baltic Sea Region have been defined and supported by concrete actions and also by involving players at all levels
3. recognises the macro-regional concept underpinning the Strategy, as it fosters new opportunities, both for horizontal cooperation between the various stakeholders of the region, and for vertical cooperation between the different levels of governance. The Strategy and its priority areas serve as a joint focus, inspiring a macroregional consolidation of efforts and guiding them towards common goals
4. acknowledges that multi-level governance is the key factor in retaining the involvement of the regions in the implementation of the Strategy. Regional, local as well as non-governmental actors around the Baltic Sea possess useful experience of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in many areas so that it is important to take advantage of these assets when implementing the strategy by giving regions and municipalities the opportunity to constructively contribute to the formulation of objectives and to the actions needed to realise them in relation to the Strategy
5. calls for broader involvement of the regions in the implementation of the Action Plan, by becoming new priority area coordinators and new project leaders, for example in new areas such as Energy and Culture, in order to sustain the momentum of the Strategy in the years to come
6. underlines that it is fundamentally important to ensure that all stakeholders in the Region – from EU- as well as non-EU– countries – can participate in the work on an equal footing. Special attention should be given to cooperation with Norway and Russia. To increase the interest and participation of non -EU member countries and regions in the BSR cooperation, a clear model of their participation should be developed. These countries should be involved in the Baltic Sea Strategy as partners
7. urges the European Commission to improve the information policy of the Strategy. The procedures of updating the Action Plan should be more transparent, which in turn

will result in the better involvement of regions in the development and implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan

8. recommends establishing specialised contact points, situated in regions (e.g. within the European Territorial Cooperation secretariats), which would bring potential players or applicants of projects, relevant to the Baltic Sea Strategy, into contact with the priority area coordinators of the Baltic Sea Strategy. Such units would support the participation in existing flagship projects and help to develop new flagship projects in a targeted manner and they would also help to facilitate the participation of local or regional players in the implementation of the EUSBSR
9. welcomes the initiative to launch a trust fund from financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank or the Nordic Investment Bank, in order to support the development of so called bankable projects. Projects, which should be interpreted as being coherent, realistic and viable when it comes to the implementation of plans and programmes
10. refers additionally to the recommendations concerning the implementation of the EUSBSR contained in the Position paper of the BSSSC *The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The second year of implementation.* adopted by the BSSSC Board on the 18th of May 2011 in which detailed provisions are included.

The BSSSC will continue its active participation in the process of developing and reviewing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The BSSSC will do this with an appreciation of its influence on tightening inter-regional cooperation and in its intention to support and promote projects and initiatives such as: Clean Baltic Shipping, the Baltic Sea History Book Project, Involve within the Horizontal Action of the Strategy "Strengthening multi-level governance, place-based spatial planning and sustainable development", Green Corridors initiative and TransBaltic.

III Cohesion Policy and territorial cooperation beyond 2013

The BSSSC-

11. strongly supports cohesion policy for all European regions. The BSSSC regards the European Cohesion Policy as a significant developmental instrument of the whole European Union considering that all regions should benefit from it but with differentiated intensity
12. notices that it would still be essential to focus, to a larger extent, on the less developed regions, which have had an opportunity to start investing into their own growth only for a number of years. Socio-economic differences shall be converged within a reasonable time scale in order to ensure the development of the European Union as a unified economic territory

13. underlines that the regional dimension should remain at the core of cohesion policy. Cohesion policy should be used to further develop the full potential of sustainable and inclusive growth in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy. Regions will play a key role in making the Europe 2020 Strategy a success and therefore increased involvement of local and regional authorities, at all stages of the decision-making process, is needed
14. stresses that the cohesion policy should maintain its own mission. Since the Strategy Europe 2020 has not sufficiently embraced a territorial approach to development, the Cohesion Policy has to fulfil the role of EU development strategy, which recognises the territorial dimensions of socio-economic processes. Securing such a role for the Cohesion Policy in the Strategy's implementation process will also ensure that regions are given their rightful place in the Strategy's delivery
15. underlines that an integrated and cross-sectoral approach is at the heart of cohesion policy. An integrated policy, encompassing economic, social and territorial objectives should be the basis of cohesion policy. Through comprehensive regional development plans and coordination, regional authorities are able to make an important contribution to a better coordination of sector policies
16. underlines that transnational programmes should be programmed in a way that would support macro-regional strategies - for example the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the upcoming North Sea 2020 strategy
17. supports the idea of the European Territorial Pact agreed between the European Commission and the European regions, as proposed by the Committee of the Regions. A signed Territorial Pact and territorialised action plans can symbolise the real, dynamic political involvement of the regions in the decision-making processes. Division of responsibilities should reflect the territorial dimension of European strategies such as the macro-regional approach.
18. is reluctant to introduce a third (permanent) category of eligible "transition regions". Instead of this, it recommends keeping the current system of two categories ("cohesion regions" and "competitiveness regions") – in addition to a phasing-in/phasing-out system for those regions passing the 75 percentage of GDP per capita limit of the EU27 average
19. calls for respective improvements and closer links between policy and funding in the coming budget period. The clear coherence of the political strategies of the EU (macro-regional strategies Europe 2020, CAP, CFP) along with the conditions and priorities of EU funding within the Cohesion and Structural Fund programmes, is of the utmost importance for future regional policy within the BSR

20. strongly supports the increase in the budget for future programmes of European Territorial Cooperation, as suggested in the EU Commission's Multi-annual Financial Framework proposal in June 2011
21. underlines the role of coherence between the Territorial Cooperation Objective and the Convergence and Competitiveness Objectives. A direct link to the latter objectives, in the beyond 2013 regulatory framework programmes, would help to accelerate the way in which concepts and policy lead to investments and then in turn conclude with the realisation of the visions of the EUSBSR
22. appeals for a reduction in the bureaucracy involved with the EU's territorial programmes. As far as harnessing and simplifying administrative procedures is concerned, real progress must be made in the next programming period beyond 2013, so that the programmes become an attractive funding instrument for a broader target group
23. calls for the inclusion of private partners as independent project partners. The rules governing the inclusion of private partners should be the same in all programmes. The great degree of uncertainty attached to the programmes, in regards to compliance with European State Aid Law, represents a major obstacle to the widespread inclusion of private partners. Therefore, the legal framework, in terms of European State Aid, needs to be clearly defined and improved
24. refers additionally to the BSSSC Statement on Cohesion Policy in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, adopted by the BSSSC Board on the 5th of October 2011, in which detailed provisions are included

With regard to urban-rural relations in the Cohesion policy
the BSSSC -

25. supports the EU Territorial Agenda 2020, in which urban-rural interdependence has been greatly appreciated
26. urges the EU policy makers to pay more attention to urban-rural relations. Therefore the improvement of funding possibilities for meta-regions within the macro-regional programmes would offer new starting points. Urban-rural partnerships provide the potential, not only to overcome traditional boundaries and conflicting interests between rural and urban areas, but also to increase cohesion at a European level
27. stresses that metropolitan regions are the centres of Europe's knowledge economy. The economic growth of the Baltic Sea Region stems from work carried out in metropolitan regions; therefore they are the backbone of the EU Strategy 2020.

IV The BSSSC youth

The young generation of the BSR is ready to make decisions about what the Baltic Sea Region should look like in the future. Therefore BSSSC includes young people in the work of all its structures, such as the BSSSC Board, the BSSSC working groups and especially it supports the Working Group on Youth Policy. The BSSSC also ensures that young people participate in the BSSSC Annual Conferences.

The BSSSC -

28. notes, with appreciation, the activities, contributions and input of young people within the framework of the Youth Event and the BSSSC Annual Conferences
29. appreciates the commitment of young people who have participated in the Youth Event and have come up with a list of measures for a more cohesive future Baltic Sea Region
30. shares the views of young people on volunteering as a major force for nurturing a civil society and strengthening solidarity- one of the core values of the EU.

V The BSSSC Annual Conference 2012.

The BSSSC Annual Conference will convene in Lillestöm, Norway from 17 to 20 September 2012 linked with the Baltic Sea Region Programme Conference.

Secretariat of the **Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation**
c/o Marshal's Office of the Westpomeranian Region
Korsarzy 34, 70-540 Szczecin (Poland)
t. +48 91 44 67 165 / 189, f. +48 91 44 67 180
e. bsssc@bsssc.com, w. www.bsssc.com



The Chairmanship of the
**Westpomeranian
Region 2011-2012**
in BSSSC