



Baltic Sea States
Subregional
Co-operation

*Adopted at the BSSSC Board meeting in
Gdansk, Poland 16.11.07*

BALTIC SEA STATES SUBREGIONAL CO-OPERATION (BSSSC)

WORK PLAN 2006 – 2008

Introduction

Baltic Sea Region constitutes a political, strategic and economic area of European and global importance. Co-operation between countries and between regions (countries) is a major driving force in the formation of interpersonal relations, partnerships and networks around the Baltic Sea. It is important to ensure favourable economic and social development in the region, increase trade between the countries, continue to focus on environmental issues and sustainable development, broaden cultural contacts and exchanges and promote stability and security for all of the region's inhabitants.

The land area of the Baltic Sea Region equals a little less than half of the area of the EU; the share of its population is 23 percent and the aggregated GDP about 16 percent of the total EU value. Nevertheless, economies of the BSR countries are growing faster than the EU average. In addition, regional co-operation is shifting from the provision of support by Western countries (W-BSR) to their Eastern neighbours (E-BSR) - to a more balanced exchange.

Over the last decade the co-operation between regional actors in the Baltic Sea region has been growing rapidly and got additional momentum in effect of the EU enlargement. Collaboration across the borders already includes many thematic fields and there is a high level of convergence in economic cooperation and investments. There are many different organisations in the BSR and there is a fear that the voice of the BSR might drown in the different messages sent out from each and everyone. Better coordination and cooperation between organisations can be a tool for better branding and getting attention to the Baltic Sea Region in Europe and global.

General Framework

The BSSSC takes into consideration the expectations and challenges brought by:

- The policy framework for the Northern Dimension from 1.1.2007 adopted under the Finnish EU Presidency 24 November 2006. This is a basis for closer cooperation between EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland.
- The Growth and Job Agenda of EU (Lisbon Agenda) and the fact that regions are important actors to fulfil the objectives of this very important European strategy.
- The Sustainable Development Strategy 2005 – 2009 (Gothenburg Agenda) and the fact that sustainable development cannot only be about what governments can do, but that all stakeholders need to be involved in different ways to address the challenges we are facing.
- The White Paper on Youth and the European Youth Pact. Active participation of young people in decision processes and activities on regional and local levels, as well as opportunities for them to exchange knowledge and experiences, is essential to build a more democratic and inclusive Baltic Sea Region
- The territorial cooperation programmes and the ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) as important means to foster concrete regional cooperation projects in the BSR 2007 – 2013.
- 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.

Important documents are also the yearly State of the Region Reports for the BSR (produced with support of BDF), which demonstrates the latest socio-economic development of the area and highlights their potentials and challenges, as well as the priorities for the BSR put forward by the CBSS and other leading Baltic Sea organisations.

BSSSC – the Mission

BSSSC acts as a Pan-Baltic organisation open to all regions around the entire Baltic Sea area, bringing added value to regional co-operation on every side of the Baltic Sea. Using its task as a political organisation and a regional partner to CBSS, BSSSC promotes and advocate the interests of the sub-regions of the Baltic Sea area to decision makers, such as national governments and the EU institutions. As a regional platform BSSSC can also provide expertise, best practice examples and implementation capacity.

Our values are:

- To be a credible organisation representing the views of sub-regions in the BSR
- To be a knowledge based organisation
- To be a visible and recognisable organisation
- To be an organisation, which is flexible and receptive to changes.

To keep in close contact to the national level in the BSR, BSSSC put weight on the close cooperation with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

The key objectives for the Norwegian Chairmanship is to:

1. Continue to promote the interests of BSR sub-regions towards national authorities, EU institutions and others – in close cooperation with other BSR organisations and interest groups.
2. Further develop BSSSC to an important organisation for sub-regional interests in BSR.
3. Strengthen cooperation with Russian sub-regions in BSR
4. Continue and develop the participation of young people in BSSSC work and act as a platform for youth cooperation on a sub-regional level in the BSR.

To achieve this, the chairmanship will:

- Continue the dialog with the national platforms based on the results from the roundtrip made in 2007 and implement the new platform for BSSSC decided by the Board in Turku 13.09.07. Together with the national platforms encourage more regions to be active and get involved in BSSSC activities and WGs.
- Cooperate and work closely with other policy formulating Baltic Sea organisations in order to gather mutual political strength in various political positions and to avoid duplication of work. Initiate and take part in political coordination groups and/or common WG on specific topics together with other organisations.
- Give special attention to attract the interest of and cooperation with Russian sub-regions by promoting the possibilities within BSR cooperation and BSSSC especially. Attend events planned and carried out by Russian actors.
- Develop the youth participation in BSSSC work as well as to make the BSSSC a useful platform for young people to engage in interregional cooperation at BSR level. The youth point of views and their participation in the work of BSSSC will support the opportunities for young people to meet and exchange experiences.

Policy areas 2006 – 2008

1. Transport and Infrastructure

Effective transport infrastructure is a key factor for a strong and competitive Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC has over the past years under the leadership of Skåne region focused on transport and infrastructure to identify common interests as well as possible conflicts, gaps and missing links in transport system in the BSR. Sub-regions can play an important role in the planning and development of infrastructure crossing national borders.

BSSSC shall:

- Participate in and chair the High Level Group on Transports for Sustainable Growth in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Support the work and be a cooperative structure in establishing a project on a Baltic Sea Transport Strategy under the Baltic Sea Programme 2007 – 2013.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board will be on Skåne region, Sweden.

2. Maritime Policy

BSSSC has welcomed the development of a coherent European Maritime Policy through the work of the EU Commission with a Green Paper and the launch of a Blue Paper on 10 October 2007. BSSSC will continue its engagement in the framework of the European Maritime Policy and has established a Working Group (WG) to foster this commitment.

Based on the conclusion from the BSSSC Annual Conference in Kiel in September 2006 the focus should be put on broadening the knowledge base, improving competitiveness and employment perspectives of the maritime economy, protecting the marine environment, improving maritime safety, creating the infrastructure for an increase in maritime transport, designing instruments for an integrated maritime policy, adapting European financial instruments, making use of strategic partnerships and developing and communicating exemplary government action.

BSSSC shall:

- Assess the content of the EU Commission Blue Paper “An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union” (from 10 October 2007), and together with other Baltic Sea organizations contribute to its implementation in the BSR.
- Promote and support the aim of developing the Baltic Sea Region into a maritime best practise region in Europe (as put forward in the Kiel Declaration) and the establishment of a political coordination group on Maritime Policy within BSR.
- Support promising and visionary maritime transnational projects in the BSR.
- Consider arranging a joint seminar or conference on the EU COM Blue Paper (Maritime Action Plan) in the first half of 2008

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with the Land Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

3. Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is the overarching long-term goal of the European Union as well as for countries and regions. The principles and objectives of Sustainable Development are economic prosperity, social equity, environment protection and international responsibilities. Sustainable development cannot only be about what governments can do. All stakeholders, regional and local authorities, businesses and citizens in particular, need to be empowered and encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways to address the challenges and seize the opportunities.

BSSSC welcomes the efforts of HELCOM in developing a Baltic Sea Action Plan, as an integrated ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities and to the protection of the whole Baltic Sea area, and calls for stronger involvement of sub-regions in the Action Plan.

BSSSC shall:

- Support the adoption and contribute to the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.
- Support constructive co-operation between Baltic 21 and BSSSC, in particular through the lighthouse projects of interest to BSSSC and Baltic Sea sub-regions. Act as sub-regional representative in the SOG of Baltic 21 and report back to the BSSSC board.

Responsible within BSSSC will until a new coordinator is found be the Chairmanship.

3.1 Energy Production and Energy Efficiency

The supply of energy as well as the use of energy in relation to climate change will be one of the major challenges in the decades to come. Predicted and prioritised by many, the seriousness of this topic gained adequate attention in Europe and at a global scale only recently. Sustainable Energy and the threats of the Climate Change was the main topic at the BSSSC Annual Conference 2007 in Turku, Finland.

The acceptance of energy policy by the EU institutions as one of the most pressing priorities reflects this development. The different forms of energy-supply, the great variations in the use of energy as well as the technological innovation in the energy-sector in the European countries contributes to the fact that the EU members and other European countries are forerunners in process to archive sustainable production and consumption of energy.

BSSSC welcomes the decision taken by the European Council in March 2007, to undertake major efforts in Europe to cope with climate change until the year 2020 and underlines that the necessary changes will not occur by themselves but must be addressed at a political level – also by regional and local authorities.

BSSSC shall:

- Contribute to the consultation process of the EU's Green Paper on Climate ("adaptation to Climate change and mitigation of consequences") together with other BSR organisations (in particular BSC-CPMR) and to the EU-wide debate on Climate issues in relation to Energy use and production.
- Work towards a closer co-operation between BSR organizations to address the issues of sustainable energy and the threats posed by climate change. Initiate and take part in a Political Coordination group on Sustainable Energy and Climate issues in the BSR, involving a broader range of Pan Baltic organisations either already working or intending to work with Energy.
- Contribute to the development of an overview (assessment) of the energy situation in the Baltic Sea region and to the development of a "regional energy vision" for the BSR. Support "best practise" and facilitate capacity building in the field of Sustainable Energy at regional and local level.
- Encourage and support regional and local authorities in the BSR to become engaged in projects that contribute to better energy efficiency, greater use of renewable energy and reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC will until further notice be on the Chairmanship

3.2 Quality of Life and Public Health

Europeans value *quality of life*. They want to enjoy prosperity, a clean environment, good health, social protection and equity. They want this not only for themselves, but for the generations to come. Along with the rest of Europe, the Baltic Sea Region is facing big challenges when it comes to an ageing population, migration of young people from rural areas to the cities, unemployment, increase in alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and lifestyle diseases. Sustainable development is closely linked to quality of life and to the wellbeing of people.

BSSSC has become a partner in the NDPHS (Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being), and will establish a WG on Public Health. Through this BSSSC would like to intensify co-operation in the field of social and health development in each particular region, to improve capacity to set priorities in public health and social well-being, encourage participation in the international activities in the whole Northern Dimension area and get access to the specific tools designed by NDPHS (Pipeline and Project Data Base), which will contribute to improved opportunities in partner search and donors funding for those initiating and implementing projects in the field of Public Health and Social Well-being in BSSSC's sub-regions.

BSSSC shall:

- Contribute to bigger awareness about NDPHS and its activities by information dissemination
- Contribute to the project implementation within NDPHS by using the capacity of sub-regions in the BSR and the WG on Public Health
- Through the WG on Public Health give support to the youth network in their efforts to promote healthy lifestyle, support sport and outdoor activities, inform about contraception and sexuality, improve health care, improve drug prevention, policy of non-smoking and non-drinking and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board – Stockholm Region????

4. Civil Security – with focus on the issue of Trafficking in Human Beings

Trafficking in Human Beings is one of the criminal phenomena that have grown the most intensely in recent years, largely because it is highly lucrative. The issue should be high on the agenda in the BSR – as both countries of origin, transit countries and receiving countries are to be found in our region – and there is still a need for actions to be taken.

BSSSC arranged a seminar for the Board in connection with the Board Meeting in Kaunas in March 2007. The responsibility to follow-up was given to the Youth Network with support from the WG Youth Policy.

BSSSC shall:

- Focus on preventive measures - like establishing or strengthening policies to prevent trafficking in human beings by producing and disseminating information, awareness raising and educational campaigns directed towards young people.
- Arrange a seminar on Trafficking for the Youth Network in Cēsis, Latvia in spring 2008

Main responsibility within the BSSSC will be the on WG Youth Policy and the Youth Network

5. Northern Dimension and cooperation with Russia

Russia is a part of the Baltic Sea Region and an important partner in the Baltic Sea cooperation. The active involvement of Russian regional partners in the Baltic Sea Cooperation has been an objective of BSSSC's policies since its foundation. The new approach to the Northern Dimension has opened a new chapter in this process.

BSSSC shall:

- Encourage and support concrete actions or projects involving regional and local levels with regions in North West Russia using the new ENPI programs as operational tools to implement regional development projects.
- Support the involvement of Kaliningrad region into the BSR cooperation
- Advocate for the development of a "regional dimension" within the Northern Dimension Policy Framework. Contribute to a consultation process on how to integrate the regional/sub-national level into the Northern Dimension concept and encourage the Steering Group to conduct such a process.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC will lie with the Chairmanship and the Brussels Antenna

6. Youth policy

The main goals of the WG Youth Policy (WGYP) are: Solidarity and cooperation, democracy and participation, mobility and full growth of young persons.

The youth participation in the BSSSC structures and activities is supported by money from the "Youth in Action" EU programme (25 000€). The project will give young participants possibility to actively use their voice at political meetings and seminars, at the BSSSC Board meetings and the BSSSC Annual Conferences. A network of youth representatives, civil servants and youth workers from all the 10 countries in the BSR will work together. After the Board-seminar in Kaunas in March 2007 Trafficking in Human Beings is included as one of the topics for the WGYP.

BSSSC shall:

- Carry out meetings in the WGYF and the Youth Network in Szczecin, Poland in November 2007, in Oslo, Norway in January 2008 and in Kaunas, Lithuania in September 2008.
- Plan and carry out a seminar on Trafficking in Human Beings in Cesis, Latvia May 2008.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC will be the on WG Youth Policy and the youth coordinator (West Pomeranian Region, Poland)

Cooperation with other organisations and structures

In its entire means BSSSC will seek cooperation with other organisations and structures. The need for sustainable development, new European policies, further European integration and the consequences of globalization require new approaches to co-operation and partnership. All parties involved in the BSR must improve their co-operation in order to achieve better performance of the BSR for the benefit of the inhabitants of the region.

A) BSSSC strives for cooperation and coordination in the BSR and will take measures to seek cooperation with other Pan Baltic organisations in its work.

BSSSC shall:

- Open the organisation for other BSR organisations on local and regional level to become “members” (**BSC/CPMR, B7, UBC**). Each of the organisations has been offered to appoint a representative to the BSSSC Board, and weight will be put on a finding good ways to strengthen cooperation through common actions.
- Initiate and take part in Political Coordination Groups on policy areas of interest to the sub-regions of the Baltic Sea area (among others based on the agreement from the Coordination meeting at Bornholm to select 1-3 areas of cooperation between BSR organisations).
- Participate in the coordination meetings of the BSR organisations under the umbrella of CBSS.
- Co-ordinate the work and political positions when appropriate with the North Sea Commission (NSC) and the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council (BEARC).

B) BSSSC has signed a Declaration of Common Interest with the **Committee of the Regions (CoR)**. BSSSC will, as far as possible, attend the plenary sessions, work proactively together with CoR bodies and encourage the CoR members from the BSR to promote the BSR concerns.

BSSSC shall:

- Cooperate closely with the CoR in preparing and carrying out the Annual Conference 2008 in Kaunas, Lithuania.
- Help initiating a Baltic Intergroup within CoR

- Take part in Structural Dialog with the EU COM under the umbrella of CoR
- Participate in plenary meetings and important events organized by CoR

C) The territorial cooperation programmes for 2007 – 2013 as well as the ENPI component of some of these programmes will be important financial tool to realise concrete projects with regional actors in the BSR.

BSSSC shall:

- Cooperate closely with the **Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007 – 2013** to facilitate and carry out a partner search forum in connection with the BSSSC Annual Conference 2008 in Kaunas, Lithuania.

D) BSSSC is organisational member of the ***Assembly of European Regions (AER)***. BSSSC will use this membership to inform AER members of matters in the BSR and of BSSSC views and activities at Bureau meetings. Closer cooperation between the two organisations can be expected within the areas of sustainable energy and youth cooperation.

BSSSC shall:

- Take part in AER Bureau meetings and contribute with information on the BSR cooperation and the work of BSSSC.
- Participate in a panel debate at the AER Energy Conference in Montpellier, France in December 2007.
- Seek cooperation in connection with the AER Youth Summer School 2008 in Sweden.
- Facilitate flow of information and views between the two organisations concerning Sustainable Energy and Climate issues.

E) BSSSC will keep close contacts and a permanent working-relationship with the ***European Baltic Intergroup of the European Parliament*** and its chairperson MEP Beazley.

F) BSSSC will keep contacts to the **Council of Europe** and especially the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

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