

Resolution

The 7th Conference on
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation

Kaunas, 28-30th October 1999

I

The 7th annual Conference of the BSSSC convened in Kaunas, Lithuania, on October 28 to 30, 1999 on the invitation of the Governor of Kaunas County.

The representatives from the subregions of the Baltic Sea states - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Russia and Sweden discussed progress and further perspectives of Baltic Sea co-operation and in particular possible contributions of the subregional level as well as requests from the subregional point of view to the concept of the Northern Dimension of the politics of the European Union, to the Pre-Accession-Strategy towards the countries acceding to the EU and to the further development of Information Society in the Baltic Sea Region.

As guests the Conference welcomed Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, and Ms. Genovaite Rokickiene, Vice-minister of Public Reforms and Local Authorities of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as representatives from the governments of the Baltic Sea Region, of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the European Commission and amongst others of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association (BCCA), Baltic Sea Commission (CPMR), EU Committee of the Regions, and Baltic Tourism Commission (BTC).

II

The Conference

recalling

* the decision of the European Council in Cologne (1999) on the "Northern Dimension for the policies of the European Union"

* the Conclusions of the 6th Conference on Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) in Roskilde (1998), and in particular its call on the EU to develop the Northern Dimension towards a Common Strategy comprising the whole Baltic Sea Region including the acceding countries, Russia and the Member States in this area and to include the subregional co-operation within the framework of Northern Dimension.

took note

of a great number of encouraging activities in the Baltic Sea region linked up with the work of the BSSSC, such as the 8th CBSS Ministerial Conference (Palanga, 1999), the annual conferences of BSPC, BCCA, UBC and the Baltic Sea Commission (CPMR) as well as the 3rd Baltic Sea Regional Conference on co-operation between Local and Regional authorities in the Baltic Sea area, arranged by the Council of Europe (Kaunas, 1999)

of the many conferences and seminars conducted by the subregions themselves.

welcomed

* the engaged work of the German and the Finnish EU Presidency, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of Regions on further developing the Northern Dimension of the European Union and on the Common Strategy on Russia

* the progress achieved so far in implementing the pre-accession-strategy of the EU, in particular the various respective contributions of subregions, governments and organisations in the Baltic Sea Region proving the quality of the framework of Baltic Sea co-operation

* the Communiqué of the 8th CBSS Ministerial Session, in particular its stated readiness of

CBSS to play an active role in the implementation of the Northern Dimension and to contribute to the development of co-operation in the key areas; furthermore the noted need for a better co-ordination of efforts undertaken by the EU and CBSS States in the region

- * the Presidency's Conclusions from the European Council in Berlin (1999) concerning Agenda 2000 paving the way for future enlargement of the EU and for the implementation of EU Structural Funds until 2006 (including the INTERREG III programmes)

- * the announcement of the current Norwegian Presidency of CBSS to further develop support of subregional co-operation as a priority of CBSS

- * the conclusions of the 8th Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region constituting the future permanent work of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) and stating that sustainable development and its environmental aspects as well as the social dimension of the enlargement of the EU are of utmost importance for the further common development perspectives of the region.

III

The Conference welcomed the development of the "Northern Dimension" of the European Union achieved so far and

- * stressed the need to further develop the concept of Northern Dimension towards a strategy for stability and co-operation comprising as a core element the whole Baltic Sea Region including the acceding countries and Russia as well as the Member States and the EU partner countries in this area, as well as the Barents Sea region and the Arctic Sea region

- * underlined the perspective of Northern Dimension to be developed as well towards a regional contribution to the main EU strategies working in the region (Common Strategy on Russia and the Pre-Accession Strategy) as taking into account that the Baltic Sea Region is the only European region with direct borders to and already existing co-operation networks with acceding countries as well as Russia

- * called upon the European Council meeting in Helsinki to mandate the European Commission to develop an action plan for implementation of Northern Dimension and to identify priorities and projects, and pointed out to the specific the readiness of the subregions of the area to contribute to this implementation

- * called upon the forthcoming Ministerial Conference on Northern Dimension to consider subregional co-operation as an important element and to incorporate subregional co-operation projects and networks as well as subregional needs and capacities in the Chairman's conclusions of the Conference

- * called upon the European Commission and the respective governments to further develop the Transeuropean Networks in regard to still existing transport bottlenecks (e.g. in North-West Russia and Finland) and to define the Baltic Sea Region as a "European transport zone" according to the regulations of Transeuropean Networks

- * called upon the European Union to develop a comprehensive European strategy for the future perspectives of the region of Kaliningrad taking into account that by future EU enlargement Kaliningrad will become a "Russian exclave" midst in the European Union

- * called upon the European Union to further enhance respective funding for multilateral interregional co-operation in general and for cross-border co-operation between subregions in the acceding countries and the subregions in North-West Russia in order to enable close cross-border links across future external borderlines of the EU at an early state of development.

- * welcomed the Common Strategy on Russia and in particular the aim to fund twinning projects and structures in order to strengthen and develop administrative structures and institutions in Northwest Russia as well on the regional and local level

- * stressed the importance of youth exchange programmes, especially with the long-term perspective, in the Baltic Sea Region and the necessity to adjust the different funding possibilities to the needs of young people

- * thanked the BSSSC ad-hoc Working Group on Northern Dimension for their respective work and tasked it to consider subregional contributions to the further implementation of Northern Dimension in the light of the results of the Helsinki Conference (November 11-12, 1999).

IV The Conference welcomed the steps ahead of the Pre-accession strategy of the EU and

- # stressed the quality and the capacities of the frameworks of Baltic Sea co-operation for contributing to the Pre-accession strategy
- # called upon the EU and the national governments to better respect needs and capacities of subregions in the acceding countries as well as in the Member states of the region within the pre-accession strategy
- # called upon the European Commission and the governments of the acceding states to emphasize twinning between regional and local authorities in Member States and candidate countries within the framework of institutional twinning (PHARE Institution building)
- # stated that a high number of co-operation projects run by the subregions themselves already give active contributions to the pre-accession strategy related to the Baltic States and Poland
- # called upon the governments of the Baltic States and Poland to give sufficient respect to the need of strengthening and developing regional administrative structures and institutions (including allocation of appropriate financial funds) within the respective countries and to actively engage the subregional governments in the accession process
- # underlined that interregional and cross-border co-operation between subregions of the area as well is providing added value to the pre-accession process in the acceding countries, and called upon the EU and the respective governments to provide sufficient respective funding easily accessible to subregions
- # stressed the need to improve environmental standards and natural resource management in the Baltic Sea Region and to direct development towards sustainability. For the acceding countries and Russia there is also an utmost need to strengthen the capacity of the environmental administration including for subregions. Further networking and project co-operation among subregions will contribute in this respect
- # thanked the BSSSC ad-hoc Working Group on Pre-accession.

V

The Conference welcomed the progress achieved so far in establishing an Information Society in the Baltic Sea Region and

- # underlined the growing importance and opportunities of the emerging Information Society even for further development of Baltic Sea co-operation and of the subregions of the area themselves
- # stressed that universal access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based services and applications in the area should be used as a necessary tool with a view to generating new employment opportunities, improving quality of life and addressing the challenges of structural adjustment, social inclusion, economic cohesion, democratic decision-making and sustainable development in less-favoured regions
- # stated that regional co-operation on Information Society is contributing to enhanced economic and social development of participating regions by implementing new ICT-based applications and services, through sharing of good practice in benefiting from new opportunities and reducing risks
- # called upon the subregions of the area to further consider the chances and perspectives provided by the tools of Information Society in regard to their respective development strategies and inter-regional co-operation and to provide respective homepages of their own with a view to visibility, improved communication and enhanced inter-regional co-operation and to link them directly to the BSSSC homepage
- # underlined the importance of the enhanced BSSSC homepage (bsssc.com) as becoming a universal tool for information and communication within the Baltic Sea Region
- # asked the subregional authorities to participate in the Helsinki Conference on Information Society in the Baltic Sea Region (February 2-4, 2000) with a view to exchange and share existing know-how, strategies and experience
- # called upon the EU to continue sufficient funding for co-operative projects contributing to increased awareness of Information Society on the subregional level and to the national governments to promote respective co-operation as well.
- # called upon all respective actors to pay attention to the risk of new social differentiation of the population concerning the use of ICT
- # thanked the BSSSC ad-hoc Working Group on IS and tasked it to further develop joint subregional projects making use of the opportunities given by IS for the benefits of subregions of the area.

VI The Conference called upon the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

- * to further develop the announcement of the Norwegian Chairmanship that furthering subregional co-operation should become a priority of CBSS
- * to overcome the increasing multitude of actions and conferences on Baltic Sea issues in order to better streamline and coordinate the various forms of cooperation
- * to play an active role in further developing and implementing the concept of Northern Dimension by using the existing and successfully working framework of Baltic Sea co-operation
- * to widen the mandate of the meanwhile well established CBSS Secretariat towards a central information and contact point for the various fields and various initiatives within the network of Baltic Sea co-operation.

the European Union

- * to enter into concrete negotiations on EU membership with Latvia and Lithuania
- * to further implement the Common Strategy on Russia
- * to overcome existing - and in addition probably forthcoming - lacks of interoperability between EU funding instruments available in the region (INTERREG III A and B, PHARE and TACIS) as outlined the latest in the Common Strategy on Russia, and in particular
 - to harmonise the rules governing INTERREG, PHARE and TACIS and to establish similar regulatory frameworks, time tables and project selection criteria as well as joint decision procedures and bodies (under INTERREG as well for strand A as strand B)
 - to indicate a certain share of the PHARE main programmes for transnational co-operation and to provide multi-annual budgeting of PHARE in order to allow multi-annual joint projects under PHARE and INTERREG III B
 - to increase the budget for cross-border co-operation under TACIS and to allocate these fundings to the regions adjoining actual and future EU Member States, in particular in North-West Russia
- * to accept and use the existing frameworks and projects on Baltic Sea co-operation as a contribution to implementing the Common Strategy on Russia, the Pre-accession strategy as well as of the Northern Dimension
- * to strengthen focus on subregional needs (and available capacities in the area) within the Pre-accession strategy towards Poland and the Baltic states
- * regretting the decision of the European Commission to abandon BSPF, to establish a new programme replacing the abolished Baltic Small Projects Facility (BSPF) aiming at facilitating the bottoms-up process in the whole region in a broad sense by funding smaller scaled subregional co-operation projects; a decision making structure should comprise regional Baltic Sea organisations as well as the respective national associations of sub-national governments
- * to continue the work of the Baltic Co-ordination Committee (BCC) being the only existing working body on implementation of EU funding available in the region.

the Ministerial Conference on Northern Dimension

- * to be aware of the needs and capacities of the subregions of the Baltic Sea Region by further developing and implementing the concept of Northern Dimension
- * to accept and incorporate the proposals of BSSSC for further development of Northern Dimension
- * to give special attention to the needs of the regions in North-West Russia and to further develop Northern Dimension as a tool for regional implementation of the Common Strategy on Russia as well as the Pre-accession strategy by making use of the existing and multi-dimensional framework of Baltic Sea co-operation
- * to include the aims and objectives of an improved Information Society in the framework of the Northern Dimension".

the governments of the countries bordering to the Baltic Sea

- * to enhance discussion on Baltic Sea issues with the respective subregions by using the "National Platforms" established by the members of BSSSC in the Baltic Sea countries
- * to include representatives of the subregions in the respective national delegations to the Ministerial Conference in Helsinki (November 1999) as proposed by the inviting Finnish Chairmanship
- * to include the National Platforms" established by the members of BSSSC and/or the respective national associations of sub-national governments in the national decision making process of PHARE
- * to incorporate capacities of subregions, which are able and ready to contribute to the implementation of Baltic-21, in the respective national Baltic-21 fora.

VII The Conference took note

and recognised with great satisfaction that BSSSC has further improved and strengthened its structure by establishing National Platforms in all respective countries in addition to the work of the bodies of BSSSC (Chairman, Board, Working Groups)

and accepted with gratitude the results of the ambitious Consultation Process run by BSSSC pointing out the specific interests, needs, experiences and capacities of the subregions into co-operation in the area and providing an inventory which can be used by all respective actors on Baltic Sea co-operation including the EU

and welcomed the decision of the Board to arrange - under the umbrella of CBSS and together with other Baltic Sea organisations engaged - a seminar/conference on future perspectives of Kaliningrad region becoming an exclave in the future European Union

and pointed out to the Board a need to arrange a similar seminar/conference on the future role of the regions of Northwest Russia in the Baltic Sea co-operation

of the decision of the Senior Officials Group (SOG) of Baltic-21 to accept BSSSC as member in the implementation process, which since spring 1999 is provided by BSSSC Working Group on Nature and Environment

of the work of the Working Group on Youth Mobility (consisting of representative of BSSSC, the Baltic Sea Youth Secretariat, Baltic Youth Forum), which will report to the next Conference on Baltic Sea Youth Co-operation (Lübeck June 15-18, 2000) on existing fundings or youth exchange available in the region, and recalled the proposal of the BSSSC Conference in Gdansk (1997) to establish a Baltic Sea Youth Foundation being able to enhance youth exchange in the region

and welcomed the improved flow of information towards the subregions provided by the updated BSSSC homepage as well as by the BSSSC Newsletter and called for further improvement of the homepage towards a universal tool for information and communication within the Baltic Sea Region

with satisfaction that the traditional BSSSC Partner Search Forum is now Internet based and run in close co-operation with UBC and BCCA (within the framework of Baltic Sea Alliance, BSA), and expressed its gratitude to the Regional Council of Etelä-Savo (Finland) for making the necessary funds and know-how available

and welcomed the increased exchange and co-operation of the existing Secretariats of Baltic Sea co-operation (BSSSC, CBSS, BSPC, UBC, BCCA, BSC).

VIII The Conference

expressed its deep respect and its thanks to the outgoing Chairman of BSSSC, Knud Andersen, for his success in further developing BSSSC as a political organisation recognised by other respective actors in the Baltic Sea area and acting on behalf of the subregions towards i.a. CBSS and the EU

thanked the Association of County Councils in Denmark for hosting and building up the BSSSC Secretariat

welcomed the incoming Chairman, Mr. Edmund Wittbrodt (Gdansk), and the future Secretariat to be provided by the Vojvodship Pomerania (Poland), taking over respective responsibilities by May 2000

thanked the current Chairman, Knud Andersen, and the Association of County Councils in Denmark for their readiness to continue their impressive engagement until spring 2000 in order to enable most successful transition of responsibilities

thanked the Governor of Kaunas County and the Counties in Lithuania for hosting this year's annual BSSSC Conference

thanked the sponsors and donors of this Conference for their financial contributions

gratefully accepted the invitation of Pärnu (Estonia) to host and to arrange the 8th BSSSC Conference in October 2000; the 2001 Conference will take place in Riga (Latvia).