

BSSSC Work Plan 2011-2012

I Introduction

The Baltic Sea Region shares many historical ties and since decades it has been the facilitator of integrative processes of local communities, institutions, regions and countries. The cooperation has been hindered during the period of cold war but nowadays the Baltic regions are increasingly growing together. The Baltic Sea Region boasts stable democracies, institutional structures, good developed infrastructure, high level of education and strong industrial traditions. Nevertheless, the Baltic regions are highly heterogeneous in economical, environmental and cultural terms. This diversity can be perceived as a potential for even faster development and progress of the region. The greatest resource of the region are the people living there – the BSR has a population of around 95.5 million equivalent of one fifth of the EU's population. What is more, almost 40% of BSR inhabitants live in Poland*. The people of the BSR are highly educated, productive and innovative. The vitality, plurality and dynamism are the characteristics of our unique economic and cultural region.

The Baltic Sea Region is in the forefront of the regions which attach particular importance to the environmental protection and sustainable development. This results in big number of initiatives at the national, regional and local level such as HELCOM Action Plan, BASREC, Baltic21, Joined Platform for Energy and Climate, Baltic Metropolis Action Plan and many other that are being realized. They are all based on long lasting and intense trans-regional, interregional and cross-border co-operation.

BSSSC plays an important role in this co-operation and is a key actor in discussion concerning the cohesion policy, energy and climate, education, maritime policy, transport and infrastructure.

BSSSC underlines not only the benefits and but also necessity for joint actions with other organizations in the BSR. Therefore BSSSC cooperates closely with other policy formulating Baltic organizations such as CBSS, CoR- Intergroup Baltic, Northern Dimension, B7, UBC and BSPC. This approach proved to be effective in the process of shaping the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

As the Commissioner Hahn stated during the First Annual Forum for the EU Strategy in Tallinn “We are very pleased to have the opportunity to organize this forum back-to back with the Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC). Your role in promoting the interests of the regions of the entire Sea area since 1993 has been an important driver for regional cooperation.”

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has guided the actions of the BSSSC and its regions in terms of devising the strategy, involvement in the implementation, taking on the responsibility for flagship projects and being a partner in numerous projects and participating as a key stakeholder in the strategy.

II Policy priorities in 2011-2012

The Westpomeranian Region will continue the work of the predecessors making the best use of former chairmanships experience, appreciating efforts and political activities of the Regions and the Board members towards the development of the Baltic Sea Region. Traditional BSSSC policy areas such as maritime policy, climate change, transport and infrastructure, education and youth will be supported and developed.

In the years to come, Europe undertakes the reform of the cohesion policy. Regions around the Baltic Sea with their various economical, political and social situations are especially entitled to formulate recommendations and demands in that field. The disparities in the Baltic Sea Region are still significant and cohesion policy should be the tool to reduce them while promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. BSSSC shall support the work of Rapporteur on Cohesion Policy and continue to be an active participant in the consultation and implementation processes of the cohesion policy. This can only be effective in a close co-operation and joined efforts of Baltic organizations such as CBSS, B7, CPMR, BSC, BSPC UBC and other. The regions' position on the future cohesion policy will be discussed and presented during the 19th BSSSC Annual Conference in Szczecin which will be held under the patronage of the Polish Presidency in the Council of the European Union. As the voice of regions is essential in creating cohesion policy, the conference resolution will be submitted to the Council of the European Union.

The success of cohesion policy is related closely to the success of the Baltic Sea Strategy, therefore the implementation process shall be closely monitored by all stakeholders. The regions around the Baltic Sea including Russia shall contribute to and benefit from achievements of the strategy. The follow up of the Strategy will take place in October 2011 along with the BDF Summit in Gdansk. BSSSC will provide bi-annual assessment of the Strategy from the subregional point of view and this will be the second topic of the BSSSC Annual Conference in Szczecin.

BSSSC is a unique regional organization which needs to be strengthened and broadened. An active participation of regions from all over the BSR countries is most required and welcomed. Therefore one of the Polish Chairmanship objectives will be to encourage more regions from Russia, Baltic States and other countries to join the BSSSC family in order to make the voice of the regions loud and clear.

BSSSC deserves to become more recognizable and visible among various Baltic organizations. The concept of BSR branding can be applied to promotion of BSSSC as an important component of creating Baltic Sea identity. The clear concept and strong visibility are necessary to reach the public of the BSR - not only policy makers but entrepreneurs, experts, NGO members and youth as well. The Polish Chairmanship intends to develop marketing concept and promote the BSSSC by interactive website, newsletter, profiles, attendance to the Baltic events and conferences.

BSSSC since its foundation was based on the fundamental values:

- 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

The Westpomeranian Chairmanship will observe those principles and fill them with new contents.

*The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – background and analysis

III BSSSC Resources 2011-2012

The BSSSC as a non-fee political network relies on the commitment and activity of its members. The BSSSC comprises of several working bodies that provide the organization with policy goals and objectives and implement them in the BSSSC member sub-regions:

The BSSSC Chairperson – The Marshal of the Westpomeranian Region Mr. Olgierd Geblewicz

The BSSSC Board – consisting of two representatives per each Baltic Sea Countries

The BSSSC Annual Conference - the network's main forum for exchanging ideas and interests

The BSSSC Secretariat - situated in the Westpomeranian Marshal's Office

The BSSSC Working Group on Maritime Policy

The BSSSC Working Group on Youth Policy

The BSSSC Working Group on Transport and Infrastructure

The BSSSC Rapporteur on Cohesion Policy

The BSSSC Rapporteur on the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Strategy

The BSSSC Rapporteur on Baltic Sea Region Programme

Brussels Antenna – Westpomeranian Regional Office

To ensure continuity, a Troika is established with the former chair Hamburg, which provides support in the initial phase, and the region of Helsinki- Uusimaa the designated chair for 2012 – 2013.

IV BSSSC Policy areas

1. Maritime Policy

The BSSSC played an active role in the process of shaping the European Maritime Policy. Since 2007 the BSSSC has been advocating the development of a common maritime policy of the Baltic Sea Region and in spring 2008 established a Working Group on Maritime Policy, chaired by Schleswig-Holstein/Germany. The group currently joins members from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden and sees its task in bringing together the maritime players of the region, formulating a 'regional maritime voice' and initiating or giving support to maritime pilot projects.

The current priority is to contribute to the implementation of the Clean Baltic Shipping Project, a BSSSC initiative, which was included to the Action Plan of the Strategy as a result of the EU Commission's consultation process.

BSSSC will continue its commitment to an ambitious implementation of the European Maritime Policy in the Baltic Sea Region and to develop the BSR into an European maritime best practice region by 2015.

BSSSC shall:

- Formulate political requirements of the regions towards decision-making bodies at the national and European level in maritime affairs.
- Contribute to the implementation of priority 4 of the Action Plan to the EU Baltic Sea Strategy (To become a model region for clean shipping) with its Working Group on Maritime Policy.
- Contribute to the implementation of the Project *Clean Baltic Sea Shipping*, funded by the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, through membership in the Political Committee of the project. Objectives: taking care for solutions suitable for all BSR ports and advocating a broad implementation.
- Support and initiate further projects of an integrated maritime policy suitable to mitigate the environmental effects of maritime activities in the region.
- Search for the cooperation with the maritime working groups of CBSS and BSPC aiming at combining the regional with the national and the parliamentary level in order to join forces for an integrated maritime policy in the BSR and strengthening the visibility, e.g. by carrying out joint events on the occasion of the European Maritime Days in Gdansk (2011) and Göteborg (2012).

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

2. Climate policies and energy security

Climate policies and energy security are two major factors of the Baltic Sea Region sustainable development. In April 2009 in the White Paper, the European Commission established a framework to cope with the impacts of a changing climate. The Commission presented an integrated approach to the climate change issue and the White Paper is accompanied by the sectoral papers on agriculture, health, water, coasts and marine issues.

The main objectives accompanied by the actions are: developing the knowledge base on energy issues, adaptation to climate change into EU policies such as: health and social policies, agriculture and forests, biodiversity, ecosystems and water, of coastal and marine areas and of production systems and physical infrastructure. Such extensive and ambitious aims can be a success only if the EU, national, regional and local authorities will co-operate closely.

When the EU decided in 2008 to cut its greenhouse gas emissions, it showed its commitment to tackling the climate change threat and to lead the world in demonstrating how this could be done. Since the EU policy was agreed, circumstances have been changing rapidly. The economic crisis hit our region of unprecedented scale. It has put big pressure onto businesses and communities across Europe and worldwide, as well as causing huge stress on public

finances. But at the same time, it has confirmed that there are huge opportunities for countries and regions in building a resource efficient society. Enhancing the EU's resilience to the impacts of climate change also means the chance to invest in a low-carbon economy, for instance, by promoting energy efficiency and the uptake of green products. The European Commission on 10 November 2010 has adopted the Communication "Energy 2020 - A strategy for competitive, sustainable and secure energy. EU energy goals have been incorporated into the "Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" and indicates the importance of adapting new technologies and renewable energy sources on a broader scale.

The Baltic Sea Region has many profound initiatives on energy efficiency, but the potential is even bigger. The sustainable public transport and the use of new technologies in building refurbishment and electronic equipment, are the areas where the Baltic Sea regions and municipalities can learn from each other. The second driver of energy security is on one hand diversity of energy sources such as renewable, clean fossil fuel, nuclear energy (where it so desired), and on the other energy suppliers not only from the Baltic Sea Region (Norway, Russia) but also from other regions all over the world.

It is the declared aim of BSSSC to focus on sustainable development in the BSR therefore the BSSSC will:

- Support 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 a sub-regional representative in the Senior Official Group of Baltic 21,
- Take part in the network and forum for dialog BASREC
- Continue co-operation with Baltex
- Support the work of Joined Platform for Energy and Climate
- Accompany the project "New Bridges" which was supported by BSSSC in its realization phase.

Main responsibility within cooperation with Baltex and Baltic 21 lies with Hamburg

3. Science and Education

BSSSC supports the aim of the Lisbon Agenda to "develop the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010."

BSSSC regards education and science as key elements for the further development of the Baltic Sea Region. The BSR is home for a number of world-class universities and research institutions. BSSSC will support all efforts to strengthen European research within the BSR by supporting bordercrossing co-operation in the field of science.

BSSSC shall:

- Continue to advocate the co-operation within science based issues as transport and logistics, maritime policy, climate protection and public health.
- Advocate academic co-operation in the BSR promoting the European instruments of funding. The exchange of students as well as that of scientists will be according to the objectives of the Bologna process a main starting point for the creation and the

further development of knowledge based societies in the BSR. A strong support is to be given to initiatives as the Baltic University Program (BUP) strengthening its position as a flagship project within the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

- Strongly support co-operation in the field of education. Exchange programmes for pupils and teachers as well as those for apprentices and trainees are important preconditions for mobility within the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC therefore appreciates the extension of European programmes for regional Co-operation within the field of education.
- Support a conference on „Education in the BSR“ to take place in Hamburg in September 2011. This conference will join experts from all countries of the BSR to discuss questions of further cooperation in the field of education.
- Enhance the exchange of experiences within the field of school management and school organisation hereby using European programmes of funding like Comenius regio.
- Support all efforts to stress the importance of life long learning as a key method of creating knowledge based societies. Being supportive in this field will mean to offer various opportunities and promote the possibilities of the broad diversity of education offered by the partner regions represented by BSSSC.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with Hamburg City , Germany

4. Youth Policy

The Europe of 21'st century offers many opportunities for young people such as easy traveling, education, internet communication, but at the same time young people face many challenges – high unemployment, demographic and climate change. Involving young people in forming political opinions and decisions, especially in matters concerning them directly, can be a way to ensure the quality and sustainability of policy making and implementation . Therefore youth policy is one of the BSSSC's main priorities and just from the early beginning of BSSSC foundation the youth work and youth events have been supported and promoted by the BSSSC Board. The BSSSC Working Group on Youth Policy was established in 2006 to intensify youth cooperation and youth policy issues in the Baltic Sea Region. Since the Norwegian Chairmanship the Youth Network representatives are elected as the BSSSC Board members. What is more, after the Annual Conference in Turku (September 2007) the youth hold the full membership of the BSSSC Board. Each Annual Conference is preceded by the youth event gathering the young people from all countries around the Baltic Sea. Those Youth conferences are prepared and organized in a joined effort of the host region and the youth often with the support of Youth in Action Program.

During the Westpomeranian Chairmanship the BSSSC will continue the dialog with the young generation of the BSR with the main purpose to involve the young people in all aspects of BSSSC policy.

The opinion of the young people on the policy of mitigation of climate change and on the structure of Baltic Sea Strategy has been an important voice of those for whom these policies are aimed for. Therefore active participation and continuous dialog with youth on all BSSSC policy areas will be the issues of a great importance of the BSSSC Board.

BSSSC will:

- Support the youth in their will to comment on and contribute to the BSSSC policy in all fields that are of youth interest
- Encourage the youth to taking part in the BSSSC working groups
- Support Working Group on Youth Policy as a permanent platform of information and ideas and experience exchange
- Organize youth event along with the BSSSC Annual Conference with the main topic: ‘Cohesion in the border region – what does it bring to the young people?’
- Contribute to the European Voluntary year recognizing the role of voluntary service in developing useful skills in the job market
- Support the youth participation in the NDPHS project - *Alcohol and Substance Abuse by the Young People*
- BSSSC will support youth cooperation in the BSSSC regions especially in the framework of youth cross-border and interregional projects
- award a young person for a video clip promoting the Baltic Sea Region as the place for education and fun.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with the West Pomerania, Poland.

5. Public Health and Quality of Life

The importance of health issues were highlighted in Health Strategy of the EU “Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013”. Also in the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan it has been stressed that “the wealth of the region is based on human capital, and healthy population is a critical factor behind sustainable economic development of enterprises and societies.” Although, the important hindrance in reaching these development aspects could be still too big disparities in health indicators of various BSR regions. In many countries health policy is a competence of national authorities, but despite the fact local and regional authorities are able to exploit competencies and overcome challenges by joining forces. BSSSC notes big challenges facing the BSR 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. Those issues were discussed during the BSSSC Annual Conferences in Zealand in 2009 and in Tallinn in 2010. BSSSC will strengthen its involvement in projects undertaken by Baltic programs concerning public health and well-being. Particularly in areas as follows:

- Health service, and health care for elderly people - healthy aging
- Promotion of innovative solutions in diagnosis – e-health
- Promotion of sustainable life style prevention of HIV/AIDS
- Involving youth in campaigns against drug and alcohol addiction .

BSSSC has become a partner of NDPHS and will support participation in the project *Alcohol and Substance Abuse by the Young People* of the Work Group on Youth Policy, promote the NDPHS’s initiatives and other Baltic projects in the field of public health such as SkanBalt, BORDERNETwork.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with Westpomerania

6. Co-operation with Russia

BSSSC underlines that the potential of the Baltic Sea Region can only be fully developed in co-operation with Russia, as Russia participates in the positive development of the Region. Russia plays a significant role in the practical regional and cross-border co-operation as a close neighbour, and therefore is an integrated part of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy.

The co-operation on equal terms and mutual understanding are crucial for a good neighbourship in the BSR. BSSSC has successfully focused on strengthening the involvement of Russian sub-regions and actors in the work of the organization. The Westpomeranian Chairmanship wants to emphasize this again and offers longtime cooperation experience with Russian partners. The Chairmanship will proceed to strengthen the involvement of Russian partners, especially on the basis of the bilateral cooperation of Hamburg with St. Petersburg and West Pomerania with Kaliningrad Region.

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 co-operation.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with the Chairmanship and Hamburg City

7. Northern Dimension

BSSSC has over the past years promoted the full integration of regional and local abilities in the Northern Dimension Policy Framework. The work started under the Norwegian Chairmanship of BSSSC 2006-2008 and continued in 2009-2010 under Hamburg's Chairmanship. BSSSC's approach has been recognized by the ND Steering Group, by the Senior Officials meeting in November 2009 and by the Ministerial meeting in November 2010. The initiative of BSSSC is underlined in the chairmen's conclusions from both meetings.

The Northern Dimension Ministerial meeting in November 2010 welcomed the BSSSC/CoR initiative and invited regional and local actors of the Northern Dimension Partners to pursue practical preparations for an enhanced sub-regional cooperation with a view to submitting a concrete proposal for the next meeting of the Senior Officials in autumn 2011.

BSSSC is member of the NDPHS (Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being). The newly established partnership on culture (NDPC) is of particular interest for BSSSC and BSR regions. To follow the work of the ND Business Council (NDBC) and the ND Institute (NDI), including universities and research institutions of the Baltic Sea region, is also highly relevant for BSSSC.

For 2011-2012 BSSSC should cooperate with the CoR to help concretize the sub-regional dimension of the ND Policy Framework as well as to follow the work of the relevant ND partnerships and structures.

9. Transport and Infrastructure

In the next years, developing environmentally friendly transport technologies will be of particular importance to the development of the Baltic Sea Region . Research and studies will be carried out in order to identify solutions that promote technical and economic use of different modes of transport. At the same time, the European Union expects member countries to submit proposals for transport links, which would eventually acquire the status of “green corridors”.

Europe has a strong position and is as a key actor in the transport market. Taking into account the promotion of the environmentally friendly transport, the inland waterways should not be omitted. Although, the inland water transport is beneficial for the environment but it leads also to the general trend of shifting cargo from trucks to ships.

BSSSC shall promote initiatives and projects which recognize the opportunities that brings an integrated TEN-T system and develop environmentally friendly transport.

BSSSC continues to support the development of the project “TransBaltic – Towards an integrated transport system in the Baltic Sea Region” as a flagship-project in the framework of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

Main responsibility within the BSSSC Board lies with Skane Region