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Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation
Hamburg Chairmanship 2009-2010

BSSSC Resolution

Of the 18th Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) in Tallinn, Estonia, 12 – 14 October 2010

Qualifying the Region for the Future – Implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Qualification

Qualification is increasingly becoming a key factor that determines the future economic and social development of regions. In a globalised world, which is rapidly developing into a knowledge society, the qualification of people is of highest relevance. This holds especially true for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) which is in most of its parts poorly endowed with natural resources and therefore relies crucially on its human resources. Further raising the competences of the people living in the BSR remains a task of utmost importance to the region. The BSR can already today build on a partly excellent infrastructure concerning education, science and research. Nevertheless, it is necessary not only to step up the efforts in the field of qualification of all public authorities and institutions throughout the BSR but also to improve the transregional coordination and cooperation.

The challenge of providing a better qualification must be addressed on international as well as on national, regional and local levels. Regions, especially, are in a position to play a key role in this endeavour as policies in the field of qualification, such as education, training and vocational training, are one of the main competences of regional governments all over the world.

As responsible authorities, BSSSC and its participating regions are actively committed to stepping up their exchange of experience and their cooperation in fields such as education, lifelong learning and knowledge society, mobility of the work force, demographic change and migration as well as in fields such as universities and youth and labour. The common objective is to transform the BSR into a model region for activities related to qualification.

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

BSSSC welcomes the EU Strategy for the BSR. This strategy is the EU's first integrated framework for activities in a European macro-region. Not only does it recognize the importance of qualification for the BSR, it also responds to key issues such as environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, attractiveness of the region and security.

Right from the beginning BSSSC and its participating regions were actively involved in the process of devising the EU Strategy for the BSR. They are also highly committed to the implementation of this strategy. BSSSC participating regions have assumed the responsibility for priority areas as well as for several flagship projects; furthermore, they are partners in numerous projects within the strategy. The implementation of the EU Strategy for the BSR is therefore seen by BSSSC as a highly suitable step for qualifying the BSR for the future. In this respect, BSSSC emphasises the role of the EU structural funds programmes as key instruments to implement the EU Strategy for the BSR, also with a view to the goals of the EU 2020 strategy.

BSSSC considers it as a confirmation of its commitment to the EU Strategy for the BSR that the first Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the BSR is organized by the EU Commission back to back to, and in close cooperation with the 18th BSSSC Annual Conference.

BSSSC ACTIONS

The BSSSC Conference in 2010 is proof that the regional authorities in the BSR are not only willing to take on their part of the challenge of making the BSR a model region for activities related to qualification – they are already demonstrating commitment and action.

Specific activities of BSSSC and its regions in the field of qualification comprise:

- Region Zealand is, together with regions in northern Germany, working on the development of a database of cross-border labour market statistics to enhance the knowledge on the mobility of the workforce and to strengthen long term cooperation between regions in the two countries.
- Hamburg assumes the responsibility for coordinating the priority area of education and youth within the framework of the EU Strategy for the BSR. Together with partners in the BSR it is envisaged to foster cooperation at school level and with teacher training institutes in order to exchange examples of best practice, to define a common approach regarding quality in teaching and learning, to improve school leadership skills and to contribute to developing the so called Knowledge Triangle (innovation - education – research).
- In a joint pilot project between the regions Vestfold County Council in Eastern Norway and Kaunas City/Region in Lithuania the new Norwegian concept for enterprise education is tested with the objective to increase skills and competences of young people in the BSR to enable them to successfully participate in the labour market.
- Skåne and Hamburg together with further partners will apply for an Interreg project in order to put into practice the ideas of the “Baltic Sea Science Link”. The “Baltic Sea Science Link” is part of the Action Plan of the European Union Strategy for the BSR. The partners of this planned “Science Link”-Interreg project intend to establish a network of contact points teaching, advising and training commercial and scientific users in modern methods of measurement with photons and neutrons in large-scale research facilities in the western BSR.

BSSSC stresses:

- BSSSC underlines the importance of education and training in the post-Lisbon strategy “EU 2020” and takes into consideration the remaining challenges for the European education systems, such as developing a competence-based approach to teaching and learning and developing the Knowledge Triangle.
- BSSSC and its regions will commit themselves to focus on the high number of “drop outs” from schools. Of equal importance is the topic of enterprise education which ensures that young people develop skills which enable them to participate effectively in the labour market. BSSSC urges the EU Commission to encourage partnerships between the worlds of education and enterprise in supporting the transition of young people into employment and in fostering the development of the competences and skills young people need to participate fully in employment and society.
- BSSSC stresses the importance of knowledge and technology transfer from scientific institutions to social and economic recipients in the region. BSSSC therefore supports initiatives such as the mentioned “Science Link”.
- BSSSC emphasizes the importance of facilitations in the labour market, where the regional and national borders within the BSR should not be an obstacle for a flexible and secure labour market. This refers especially to administrative-, language- and cultural barriers. Clear objectives should be the systematic identification and removal of hindrances to a common labour market as e.g. practiced in the regions Schleswig-Holstein and Syddanmark within the INTERREG A project Pontifex.
- BSSSC underlines the importance of involving young people and youth organisations on regional and local levels in the endeavours to step up efforts concerning qualification which are not only necessary for the labour market, but also for social inclusion and active citizenship. The BSSSC youth network contributed to the conference with a special workshop on the topic of Youth and Labour.
- BSSSC calls upon the EU and its member states to secure an active involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the BSR. BSSSC notes that EU structural funds contribute substantially to implement these objectives. BSSSC therefore calls upon the EU to maintain its cohesion policy as a policy for all regions and to keep up the European Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG) programmes supporting cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. BSSSC regards the Baltic Sea Region Programme as a key instrument for the implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. Additionally, BSSSC emphasises that EU sectoral programmes deliver valuable support to specific activities, particularly in the field of science and research.
- BSSSC states that the implementation of common goals of EU Member States, Norway and the Russian Federation through an integrated Baltic Sea Programme has failed. To achieve the common goals of a Baltic Sea Area including the Russian Federation, BSSSC calls upon the European Commission to reallocate Russian ENPI funds until 2013 into cross-border programmes of the Baltic Sea area and, furthermore, to support a programme design for the future funding period involving the Russian Federation as a full partner.