



## BSSSC Annual Conference Resolution 2017

*The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network organisation for decentralised authorities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). BSSSC acts as an open, non-party political platform, which represents the interests of all sub-regions around the Baltic Sea — promoting common political ideas with a joint regional approach.*

### Main messages

- BSSSC underlines the need for cooperation cross sectors, cross borders, between all levels of government - involving citizens (especially the young generation) and relevant actors in the BSR to make a better Europe.
- BSSSC stresses that EU Cohesion Policy promotes stability, contributes to reducing development disparities between European regions and therefore should be well-resourced in the next funding period. It supports investments and strengthens sustainable economic development in Europe and should be continued post 2020 for all regions. ETC is of high relevance for integration, prosperity and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. The BSSSC calls for the ETC to be systematically strengthened.
- BSSSC promotes the principles of Subsidiarity and multilevel governance in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and stresses the importance of involving the youth voice.
- BSSSC recognises the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Russia and strives for involvement of the sub-regional level in the Northern Dimension.
- BSSSC supports all genuine possibilities of the young people to participate in the governance of their municipality and/or school and influencing the decisions taken through access to public discussions. BSSSC calls on politicians in municipalities and regions around the BSR to facilitate youth involvement in political processes as well as allocating funding in support of concrete projects for youth involvement.
- Sustainable Development cannot be achieved by one region alone but rather by increasing coordination and cooperation. BSSSC commits itself as voice of the sub-regions in the CBSS Expert Group for Sustainable Development (EGSD) and to advocate and support the implementation of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan.
- The BSSSC is encouraging the states and regions in the BSR to take a common view of key transport development actions with their direct neighbours in the framework of the “Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics” and with the EU Eastern Partnership countries. BSSSC supports the position of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to extend the ScanMed and the North Sea-Baltic Corridors along the Gulf of Bothnia.
- The BSSSC welcomes the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018 (ECHY 2018) as an excellent opportunity to highlight the cultural heritage assets of the Baltic Sea region and herewith direct public awareness to our common cultural roots. BSSSC calls on the EU and the governments of the BSR to pursue promotional measures also beyond 2018, and to improve the funding opportunities for transnational and cross border projects in the area of culture, cultural heritage and identity building.
- BSSSC welcomes Smart Specialisation as an effective model for increasing regional competitiveness based on innovation ecosystems and collaboration platforms in the Baltic Sea Region and in the EU. BSSSC stresses that Smart Specialisation strategies should be maintained and reinforced post 2020 with a stronger focus on transnational, cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation.
- BSSSC calls for stronger efforts at the EU, national and regional level to support the competitiveness of the different sectors of the maritime economy. Protecting the Baltic Sea is one of the key issues in the Maritime Policy area, and BSSSC strongly supports the initiative to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan in the forthcoming ministerial meeting in 2018.



## **Cohesion = Togetherness - working together for a better Europe**

The BSSSC has gathered stakeholders from the sub-regional and local level in the Baltic Sea Region for the 25<sup>th</sup> time in Potsdam, Germany under the headline "Cohesion equal Togetherness". The political landscape in Europe and in the Baltic Sea Region is demanding - with challenges such as: citizens' lack of trust in the political systems with movements towards centralisation, infringements of civil liberties and threats to the independence of the judiciary, poor EU-Russia relations, refugee crisis, reintroduction of border controls, extremism and xenophobia. BSSSC stresses that these challenges can only be overcome by working together. Bottom-up cooperation - involving local and regional level - is more important than ever and the cooperation must be based on shared values of democracy, peace, respect for human and social rights and the rule of law

BSSSC believes that cohesion is more than programmes and projects - it needs to be read as a wider concept to secure stability, sustainability and prosperity in Europe. The EU has celebrated its 60 years' anniversary of the Treaty of Rome this spring. Peace and democracy are EU's greatest achievements, but they should not be taken for granted. All political actors have to take responsibility and involve and interact with the citizens. BSSSC especially acknowledges the importance of a continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation in the BSR - as they are at the core of social and political change and the key to any region's future, welfare and prosperity.

All political levels need to cooperate across borders - within the EU and between the EU and its neighbours – and should examine how every single one can contribute to improving mutual knowledge and understanding and to enhance trust. The future of Europe rests on mutual trust. This should be reflected by all EU policies including funding programmes.

BSSSC appreciates the meeting of the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) members in Reykjavik on 20 June 2017 and their commitment to maintain and strengthen the role of CBSS - as well as to continue the efforts of improving regional synergies and cohesion in the BSR in cooperation with all BSR organisations and formats.

BSSSC urges all Baltic Sea countries and regions to contribute to the discussion on the Future of Europe – and to advocate the notion of strengthening solidarity and togetherness in challenging times, with commitment to cooperate for a better future.

## **Cohesion Policy, post 2020**

BSSSC underlines the high European added value of EU Cohesion Policy. Cohesion Policy plays an important role for a harmonious regional development in Europe. It promotes stability, contributes to reducing development disparities between European regions and strengthens economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe. It fosters the ownership of European policies on the ground by bringing them closer to the citizens in the regions. BSSSC is convinced that also in future, EU cohesion policy needs to further reinforce its strong strategic and result orientated approach.

BSSSC stresses the high relevance of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) for integration, prosperity, sustainable development and understanding among people. BSSSC calls for the ETC to be systematically strengthened and well-resourced in the next funding period, and is committed to contribute to the drafting of programmes in the BSR.

BSSSC is convinced that cohesion policy after 2020 must take greater account of those regions that contribute above average to growth in the EU in order to maintain universal support for the policy. These regions should be strengthened in their role as drivers of regional development and in their ability to promote positive effects, also for the benefit of less developed areas within the EU and in the global context.



Taking into account the challenges the EU is facing regarding its future, BSSSC believes that there should be a secured budget for cohesion policy based on shared development objectives post-2020. All EU regions – both less developed and most developed - should be covered by cohesion policy. BSSSC calls for the programming in the new financing period to be designed as a clearly and conclusively structured, lean and partnership-based process between European Commission, Member States and regions.

BSSSC underlines that it is of utmost importance to proceed to a comprehensive and radical revision and reduction of the administrative requirements imposed on the ESIF management and control systems by the European level – including the state aid requirements - to increase the effectiveness of cohesion policy and its significant European added value.

Finally, BSSSC emphasises the high importance of ensuring as much planning security as possible to allow cohesion policy programmes to fulfil their long-term regional development goals. A reduction of the seven-year programme duration would seriously endanger the effective functioning of cohesion policy. BSSSC therefore strongly advocates maintaining the seven-year period.

### **The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**

BSSSC acknowledges the EUSBSR as an important basis/framework for its policy work and actions. BSSSC will continue to promote the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance in the implementation of the EUSBSR. BSSSC calls for better alignment of ESIF funding instruments with macro-regional strategies and better access to EU funding programmes for macro-regional projects.

BSSSC stresses that the young inhabitants of the Baltic Sea Region are important stakeholders in the implementation of the EUSBSR, and is advocating for better involvement of the youth voice in line with the principle "Nothing about us without us". BSSSC appreciates the good cooperation with the Union of the Baltic Cities and EuroRegion Baltic with regard to youth involvement in the BSR, and confirms its commitment to strengthen the voice of the young people in the framework of the EUSBSR.

BSSSC highlights the importance of participation of municipalities, non-governmental organisations and citizens in developing and implementing the EUSBSR. BSSSC welcomes the first Participation Day carried out during the Annual Forum 2017 in Berlin, and encourages the organisers to continue their efforts in the future.

### **Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with neighbouring countries**

BSSSC recognises the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Russia despite the problematic political situation on national and supranational levels. BSSSC strives for the involvement of the sub-regional level in the Northern Dimension and is committed to use its role as observer in the ND Steering Group - to facilitate information exchange between ND structures and sub-regional actors in the BSR.

BSSSC looks forward to the signing of the financial agreement between the EU and Russia that will open the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for partners from Russia in project cooperation.

### **Youth involvement and empowerment**

BSSSC acknowledges that the youth of the BSR have legitimate opinions and want to share their approaches and models for stronger involvement in decision-making at all levels of governance. BSSSC supports all genuine possibilities of the young people to participate in the governance of their municipality and/or school and influencing the decisions taken through access to public discussions. Young people's commitment, creativity and critical thinking must be seen and utilised as a resource.



BSSSC welcomes the results of the joint seminar in the framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin in June "*Nothing about us without us - making it work*" and the results of the BSSSC Youth Event in Trebnitz, 18 - 20.09 2017 "*Together in the Baltic Sea Region*" and encourages the BSSSC Youth Team to continue their successful work and fruitful cooperation.

BSSSC calls on politicians in municipalities and regions around the BSR to facilitate youth involvement in political processes as well as allocating funding in support of concrete projects for youth involvement.

### **With regard to the role of cohesion and cooperation**

BSSSC strives for improved dialogue and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures in the Baltic Sea area. Together we can achieve more and make our voice heard on the national, macro-regional and in particular on the EU-level. A better coordination of political priorities and of joint actions in fields of common interest will improve regional influence and at the same time make better use of limited resources.

BSSSC sees the need to strengthen youth cooperation and youth exchange projects organized with the aim of emphasizing the common regional identity of the BSR, as the sustainable future of the BSR depends on the ability of the young generation to work together across borders and to build on shared values and mutual understanding.

BSSSC is convinced that coordination and cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region and beyond will strengthen cohesion and thereby foster togetherness. Consequently BSSSC seeks to further enhance cooperation especially in the fields of sustainability, transport, culture, innovation and maritime policy:

#### ➤ **Baltic 2030 Action Plan - realising the vision of the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Sustainable Development cannot be achieved by one region alone but rather by increasing coordination and cooperation. BSSSC appreciates the work done by the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development (EGSD) and the Baltic 2030 Unit to develop the Baltic 2030 Action Plan as a regional response to the global challenges of the UN Agenda 2030.

BSSSC commits itself as voice of the sub-regions in the CBSS EGSD and to advocate and support the implementation of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan. BSSSC calls on the BSR countries as well as on all municipalities and regions to take actions and contribute with concrete measures to come from vision to action.

BSSSC recognises youth in the BSR as not mere beneficiaries of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, but as the key drivers for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. BSSSC acknowledges that youth can foster the innovative use of social media and communication tools to further the call for comprehensive Sustainable Development in the BSR and to follow up on the progress of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan.

#### ➤ **Cross-border transport**

BSSSC acknowledges that infrastructure and transport is a key not only for togetherness, but also for economic development in the Baltic Sea area and beyond. The BSSSC is encouraging the states and regions in the BSR to take a common view of key transport development actions with their direct neighbours in the framework of the "Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics" and with the EU Eastern Partnership countries. In this context, it is important that all relevant actors cooperate to maximise the opportunities presented by the Chinese "New Silk Road / One Belt One Road" project. The BSSSC is committed to use its network of regions to support this development.

In conjunction with the current adjustment of corridors under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the BSSSC supports the position of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to extend the ScanMed and the North Sea-



Baltic Corridors along the Gulf of Bothnia in Northern Sweden and Finland as well as to include a connection to the port of Narvik in Norway. The BSSSC believes that these extensions would serve to establish a strategic gateway for the EU to the Arctic region, which is important in light of the geo-political developments in this region.

➤ **European Cultural Heritage Year 2018**

The BSSSC welcomes the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018 (ECHY 2018) as an excellent opportunity to highlight the cultural heritage assets of the Baltic Sea region and herewith direct public awareness to our common cultural roots.

The BSSSC is convinced that the EU, if it is to survive, has to be more than an economic and monetary union. Cultural heritage assets point to what unites us in the BSR and in Europe herewith strengthening the sense of togetherness and belonging to a community of shared values.

In order to fully realise the potential of cultural heritage for the further development of EU and its neighbouring countries, the BSSSC calls on the EU and the governments of the BSR to

- pursue the debate on the societal value of the European cultural heritage – both material and immaterial - and suitable promotional measures also beyond 2018,
- improve the funding opportunities for transnational and cross border projects in the area of culture, cultural heritage and identity building, including funding of small scale projects and intercultural dialogue with non-member countries beyond the cross border level,
- support projects and initiatives aiming at better attracting the younger generation for their cultural heritage by developing new marketing concepts, e.g. by the targeted use of New Media,
- support identity building initiatives not only on the European but also on the macro-regional scale: The BSSSC promotes the initiative of the City of Kiel for the proclamation of BSR Cultural Cities,

➤ **Smart Specialisation**

BSSSC welcomes Smart Specialisation as an effective model for increasing regional competitiveness based on innovation ecosystems and collaboration platforms in the Baltic Sea Region and in the EU. BSSSC stresses that Smart Specialisation strategies should be maintained and reinforced post 2020 with a stronger focus on transnational, cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation. BSSSC underlines that Smart Specialisation plays a key role for fundamental economic transformation and modernisation of our economies at the local, regional and interregional level.

➤ **Maritime Policy**

Blue Growth offers a huge potential for the Baltic Sea Area. Maritime industries, shipping, coastal and cruise tourism, offshore wind power, aquaculture and blue biotechnologies are examples of the rapidly growing sectors of maritime economy. BSSSC calls for stronger efforts at the EU, national and regional level to support the competitiveness of these sectors.

Protecting the Baltic Sea is one of the key issues in the Maritime Policy area. BSSSC has an observer status in HELCOM and will strongly support the initiative to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan in the forthcoming ministerial meeting in 2018. The BSSSC will cooperate with other organisations, for example the CBSS Expert Group on Maritime Policy, VASAB and the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. BSSSC calls for establishing cooperation in the Arctic on maritime issues connected with the Baltic Sea area.

## **BSSSC Annual Conference 2018**

**25th BSSSC Annual Conference**  
**Conference Resolution**  
21-22 September 2017 in Potsdam, Germany



The BSSSC thanks the host region of Brandenburg for a well-organised and interesting conference 2017, and is thankful for the kind invitation from the Pomeranian Region to convene the next Annual Conference on 10 - 12 September 2018 in Gdansk.