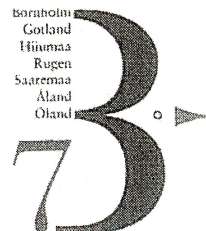
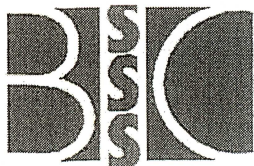


EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



Declaration of common interest 2008-2011

The Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Mr Gerhard STAHL

and

the Chairman of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC), Mr Arne ÖREN
the Chairman of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), Mr. Per Bødker ANDERSEN
the Chairman of the Baltic Sea Islands Network (B7), Mr. Toomas KASEMAA

declare their common interest in continuing the cooperation - first realised by BSSSC members as members of the CoR and enhanced by the Declaration of Common interest between CoR and BSSSC signed in February 2007.

By signing the following Declaration for the years 2008-2011 the cooperation is enlarged to include all BSR organisations representing local and regional level of governance in the Baltic Sea Region.

The signing associations will coordinate in between themselves and will assign one single representative for their contacts with the Committee of the Regions.

The Baltic Sea Commission, represented by its chairperson Ms. Christel LILJESTRÖM is already included in an extended cooperation with the Committee of the Regions by means of the action plan, signed with CPMR. Therefore, the BSC is not mentioned explicitly in this declaration of common interest, however, the Baltic Sea signatories point to their close co-operation with other regional organizations in the Baltic Sea Region like the Baltic Sea Commission.

In general, BSSSC, UBC and B7 participation in the work of the CoR should be further fostered wherever this provides a political added value for all parties. Efforts to further develop the cooperation will be made in particular in the following fields:

1. Involvement of expertise in selected areas of interest of the Committee of the Regions

Drawing on the expertise of its members and working groups, representatives of BSSSC, UBC and B7 may be invited on a case-by-case basis to contribute actively to the work carried out by the CoR Secretariat on specific topics. This may include, if appropriate, support to the CoR Commission's secretariats in their assistance to rapporteurs, including the monitoring of the implementation of the subsidiarity principle in specific dossiers.

2. Dialogue between the European Commission and the Associations of Regional and Local Authorities

The CoR Secretariat will include BSSSC, UBC and B7 among the associations invited to the dialogue between the European Commission and the Associations of Regional and Local Authorities as established by the EC's Communication (COM (2003) 811 final). Moreover, the BSSSC, UBC and B7 will be given the possibility to respond to calls for meetings (as published on the CoR website).

3. Participation in conferences and other activities organised respectively

The CoR Secretariat and the Secretariats of BSSSC, UBC and B7 will explore how to further improve the coordination of their communication channels to increase the visibility and impact of their joint actions. Specifically, the CoR Secretariat and the Secretariats of BSSSC, UBC and B7 should aim to maximise possibilities for mutual participation in events organised by each party. More specific actions could include:

- Where appropriate, the participation of speakers from BSSSC, UBC and/or B7 at events organised by the CoR and vice versa.
- CoR and BSSSC, UBC and B7 agree to explore the possibilities to co-organise seminars in the Baltic Sea Region in 2008-2011, on the themes of mutual interest, i.e. EU maritime policy, the development of the Trans-European Networks in Northern Europe or the implementation of EU energy and climate action plans in regard to sustainable energy and combating climate change, by drawing on the expertise and experience of the local and regional level in the Baltic Sea Region.

4. Joint activities in the field of communication and the mutual publicity of key events

The CoR Secretariat and the Secretariats of BSSSC, UBC and B7 will continue to coordinate their strategies in the field of communication. The mutual use of the tools of communication (Newsletters, Websites etc.) of all organisations may be further enhanced.

5. Joint activities in relation to the CoR's responsibility for safeguarding local and regional interests and for monitoring the application of the Protocol on the principle of subsidiarity.

In the framework of European governance the CoR plays a key role safeguarding local and regional interests within the European Union. An important part of this role is as the guardian of Subsidiarity and Proportionality. The CoR therefore has set up a Subsidiarity Monitoring Network which includes an interactive website. BSSSC, UBC and B7 will take part in this Subsidiarity Monitoring Network wherever appropriate.

For the consultative work of the CoR and the subsidiarity monitoring the CoR Secretariat and the Secretariats of BSSSC, UBC and B7 will cooperate closely in areas of common interest. More particularly BSSSC, UBC and B7 will cooperate with the CoR in questions concerning any specific issues and/or problems at the regional level arising from the implementation of any given European draft legislation in the Baltic Sea area.

6. Joint efforts to strengthen regional participation in the Northern Dimension

BSSSC, UBC and B7 as well as the CoR are working to include a "Regional Dimension" in the framework of the Northern Dimension Policy, and will support each other in all efforts to foster the regional participation in the practical evolvement of the Northern Dimension. Cooperation with the Barents Euro Arctic Region will be considered whenever appropriate.

7. The development and realization of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: A common objective

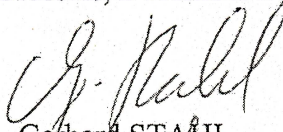
BSSSC, UBC and B7 as well as the CoR agree in the objective of developing and implementing a European Baltic Sea Strategy (BSS) as an important framework for the further development of the Baltic Sea Region. The BSS is an example of how to enhance the performance and competitiveness of a European mega region and a model of successfully applied EU regional policy. All parties agree that local and regional authorities play an indispensable part in this process and will support each other in all activities of common interests concerning the Baltic Sea Strategy.

8. Practical arrangements

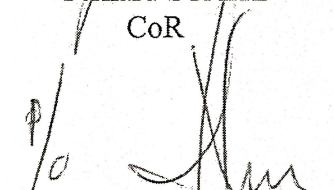
In order to ensure access to the CoR and its activities, the co-signing associations will be allocated two permanent passes each to the Committee each year. One extra pass will be given to the general coordinator for all of these associations.

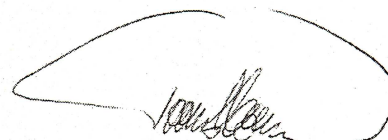
The co-signing associations could, from time to time, be given access to a meeting room (for 20-30 people), depending on availability within the CoR.

Brussels, December 2008


Gerhard STAHL
CoR


Arne ÖREN
BSSSC


Per Bødker ANDERSEN
UBC


Toomas Kasemaa
B7