



BSSSC Annual Conference Resolution 2016

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network for decentralised authorities (subregions) in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). BSSSC has now gathered for the 24th time for its Annual Conference (AC).

This year's conference "Bridge over Troubled Water – Value of Regional Co-operation in Challenging Times" is dedicated to the European challenges we face today in the BSR, such as citizens lack of trust in the political system, refugee crisis, reintroduction and intensification of border controls, EU-Russia relations, weak economic growth, extremism and xenophobia. These challenges can be overcome together via co-operation within our common BSR. BSSSC wants to underline the need for cooperation and to maintain networks and people-to-people contact in the challenging times - especially the role of local and regional authorities.

With regard to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and vision 2030

BSSSC would like to highlight the following important input, points and statements - to be put forward to the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Stockholm:

It is the regions which are primarily responsible for the implementation of the EUSBSR. In contradiction with this, so far, the regional level is not officially involved in the (further) development of the Strategy. BSSSC calls for stronger involvement of the regions in the decision-making processes of the Strategy, e.g. by regular opportunities to present and discuss positions from the regional perspective.

BSSSC strongly supports maintaining the EUSBSR as an important framework for collaboration in the BSR in the future as well.



With regard to Cohesion Policy post 2020

The added value of the EU can be clearly shown to the European citizens through structural funds and their projects. BSSSC stresses that this is very important also in the BSR. If European policies and initiatives are to be successfully implemented, the EU needs true involvement of subregional actors: they are of utmost importance in achieving EU-priorities, such as research, innovation, sustainable maritime and regional growth, renewable energy, SME, accessibility, competitiveness, and job creation.

BSSSC believes that a well-resourced budgetary allocation is the pre-condition for a credible and tangible delivery across the EU in the next programme period as well. Funding portfolio for BSR should include grants as well as other financial instruments where appropriate. Synergies between different funding instruments should be further developed. Radical simplification is a vital condition for better delivery of results.

BSSSC stresses that by bringing together actors from different Member States, third countries and regions, cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation deliver an essential contribution and a clear added value to the BSR and the whole of Europe.

BSSSC also gives particular emphasis to the fact that transnational collaboration has been extremely important in the BSR and that this comprehensive policy of territorial cooperation should be further strengthened and well-resourced.

With regard to youth involvement

The BSSSC Board underlines the importance of a continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation of the BSR as they are at the core of social and political change - and the key to any region's future economic success.

BSSSC highly appreciates the active participation of representatives of the BSSSC regions, Euroregion Baltic, and the UBC in the AC of the BSSSC and in the youth event and the results of the event organised by Häme Regional Council and HAMK University of Applied Sciences.



BSSSC Shares the view of the Youth Event participants that youth unemployment, social exclusion, intolerance and violent radicalization are serious challenges facing our societies and highly appreciates and supports any commitment to meet these challenges.

BSSSC supports the vision of the BSR as the region of high quality education, sustainable economy, innovative and creative industries and the region effectively reducing youth unemployment, social exclusion and inequality in the labour market.

BSSSC calls on the local, regional and European authorities for re-engaging young people in building an inclusive, healthier, more equal, resilient and sustainable society with the use of digital technologies.

BSSSC welcomes the EU New Skills Agenda adopted by the European Commission on 10th June 2016 with the aim to ensure that young people develop the skills they need to find fulfilling jobs and become confident, engaged citizens.

BSSSC acknowledges that culture is a catalyst for innovation and that new technologies are available to empower young people's creativity and innovation and boost interest in culture, the arts and science. The BSSSC calls on the different BSR organisations to intensify their cooperation in the area of youth issues and to discuss the possibility of creating a regular common Baltic Sea Youth Forum and further on a Baltic Sea Youth Council similar to existing structures such as the Nordic Youth Council, the Barents Youth Council and the Arctic Youth Council, in order to strengthen the youth cooperation in the BSR.

With regard to the Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with Russia

BSSSC recognises the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Russia on the local and the regional level despite the problematic political situation.

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.



With regard to value of Regional Co-operation

More than ever the BSSSC underlines the importance of facilitating bottom-up cooperation and support concrete activities between actors at local and regional level across borders in these challenging times. Cooperation programmes and financial instruments, e.g. Interreg, are regarded as important tools for facilitating such cooperation.

➤ Cooperation towards a greener future

Bio-economy offers great opportunities for accelerating growth and sustainable development in the BSR. The cross-cutting nature of bio-economy calls for new ways of working and cooperating, as well as new processes, services and products that can contribute to a greener future.

BSSSC encourages Baltic Sea states and regions to increase the awareness of the many opportunities offered by bio-economy, and underlines the positive effects of sharing good practises, knowledge and expertise. Providing meeting places and platforms for stakeholder engagement and cooperation will help to boost innovation and investments in bio-economy and support the transition towards a more sustainable economic development.

BSSSC supports reinforcing the dialogue between bio-economy research and policy making in order to ensure that research results provide and promote a sound scientific basis for responsible political decision-making.

BSSSC calls for new ways of public-private cooperation and welcomes the establishment of platforms in the BSR for exhibiting bio-economy and circular economy business solutions.

➤ Growth corridors

The BSR is crossed by three core network corridors (CNCs) under the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T): Scandinavian-Mediterranean, North Sea-Baltic and Baltic-Adriatic. The BSSSC believes that



these corridors have a significant potential for stimulating sustainable economic growth in the BSR beyond the transport sector itself and beyond the immediate territories they cross.

In order to fully realise the benefits of the CNCs crossing the BSR, the BSSSC would like to underline the importance of the following factors, and requests the European Commission and member states to take them duly into consideration in the future implementation of the corridors:

- Improve cross border interoperability by removing physical and administrative bottlenecks
- Synchronize transport planning and investments between the BSR countries, incl. Norway and Russia
- Link long distance transports to urban transport systems, and facilitate for last mile connections
- Facilitate for a large-scale roll out of low-emission vehicles & technologies, with cross border harmonisation of technological specifications and density of charging systems and filling stations for alternative fuels
- Better connect second level nodes and access routes to the CNCs by increasing financial allocations to the comprehensive network of the TEN-T, and by introducing more favourable co-financing rates for projects on this network.
- Multi-level governance, also allowing for the involvement in corridor forums of regions, ports and transport hubs not located directly on the corridors
- Fully integrate the perspective and needs of the business sector and transport operators
- Improve the capacity of stakeholders to benefit from the various financial instruments under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)

➤ **Blue Growth**

BSSSC sees a huge potential for sectors covered by the Blue Growth initiative in the BSR. In some regions a renaissance of the shipping sector is already underway, some (like energy, life science and blue medicine) are emerging and may develop fast. BSSSC calls for strengthening efforts at national and regional level to finance blue growth sectors and streamline funding opportunities.

It is important to continue encouraging an integrated and holistic approach to blue growth, identifying synergies and symbioses that give added value to maritime space and waterways, instead of a more sector-based approach, hereby opening innovative development possibilities to a variety of actors within



the value chain and the incentive to create and synchronize frameworks for blue growth and development at the regional level.

➤ **Culture and social integration**

The BSSSC is convinced of the integrative force of culture. Culture can be used as an instrument to contribute to the integration of the BSR. European and regional integration will not be achieved solely through treaties and political agreements. This in mind, the BSSSC welcomes the activities of the EUSBSR Policy Area Culture.

BSSSC calls on the decision-makers of the region to sustainably support the EUSBSR Policy Area Culture. The positive impacts of culture and creativity on economy, employment, regional development, social integration and cohesion are proven. Culture builds bridges across borders and across social and political differences. The force of culture as a catalyst for social and technological innovations has to be better used and promoted.

BSSSC calls for better possibilities for the funding of cultural projects in the upcoming EU funding period. Appropriate funding conditions are a precondition to fully exploit the potential of cultural projects for the regional development of the BSR.

BSSSC Chairmanship and Secretariat

Thanks to the outgoing chairmanship of Helsinki-Uusimaa region!

Welcome the incoming chairmanship of Eastern Norway County Network (2017 - 2018)!