



THE ONLINE BSSSC ANNUAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION 2020

Adopted by the Board – December 7th, 2020

THE BALTIC SEA STATES SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION BSSSC MET ONLINE SEPTEMBER 30TH – OCTOBER 1ST, 2020 TO DISCUSS “STRONG AND INCLUSIVE COOPERATION IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION – NOW MORE THAN EVER”.

THE BSSSC ANNUAL MEETING OF BALTIC SEA REGION STAKEHOLDERS WAS HELD ONLINE BECAUSE OF THE COVID -19 RELATED RESTRICTIONS. IT IS TO OUR GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THE PANDEMICS HAVE NOT PREVENTED US FROM CONTINUED COOPERATION AND DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE AND THE BALTIC SEA REGION (BSR).

MAIN MESSAGES:

- BSSSC, especially given increasing tendencies towards nationalism, centralisation and infringements of civil liberties as well as a threat to the rule of law, continues working to promote and strengthen democratic values and subsidiarity. In this connection, we follow the dialogue on the need for new forms of deliberative democracy which helps to involve all citizens, including the youth, into the decision - making processes. Solidarity, participation, transparency and cooperation are among the key values to us.

We look with interest towards the planned Conference on the Future of Europe stalemated by COVID -19, which was supposed to constitute a true European bottom-up dialogue involving all the levels of society;

- BSSSC has mainstreamed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in all its work aiming at contributing to a just and sustainable future in the BSR and beyond and we express our satisfaction that SDGs have been included into the policies and programmes of the European Union (EU) and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS);

-BSSSC appreciates continued practical cooperation in the Baltic Sea region within the framework of the pan-Baltic institutions, organizations and programmes allowing thus for the inclusion of all the Baltic Sea Region countries in the work;

- BSSSC appreciates the State of the Union address 2020 presented by President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on September 2020. We support the ambition to emerge stronger and better prepared from the pandemic while making use of the Next Generation EU to support green, digital and social resilience and wishing to join in implementing the key policies such as the European Green Deal to stimulate the creation of green and sustainable jobs;

- the BSSSC supports the Paris Agreement provisions setting out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change and the European Commission's proposal to cut CO2 emissions by at least 55% by 2030 which would set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate neutral by 2050;

MAIN MESSAGES:

-BSSSC appreciates the plan to establish the EU Health Programme (with an adequate budget) to allow better coordination of efforts aimed at increasing crisis preparedness and management as well as improvement of health and safety of citizens;

- finds the European Digital Strategy as indispensable to find new solutions to the changing situation and new global challenges as well as to provide tools for the citizens to be better prepared for the new digital reality (Digital Europe Programme 2021- 2027);

- strongly supports innovation and research-based regional development and smart specialisation;

- BSSSC welcomes the reinforcement of the Cohesion Policy and the EU Recovery Plan by the European Council insisting at the same time on a more decentralised approach. It calls on the European Parliament to advocate for improving the funding conditions in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and looks forward to the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 by, in particular, increasing the EU co-financing rates to levels sustainable by national and regional budgets which are already heavily strained by the fight against COVID – 19. We follow the work of the Cohesion Alliance established within the Committee of the Regions (CoR);

- as confronting the formidable challenges which Europe faces today will require close cooperation between its regions and cities, BSSSC calls for a strong financial basis of the INTERREG Program, in particular the cross-border and transnational programmes covering the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC looks also forward to the development and implementation of the new generation of cross-border cooperation programmes between the EU member states and Russia. The funds earmarked for interregional innovation investments should not be deducted from the national allocations for European Territorial Cooperation;

- BSSSC sees the Northern Dimension and its partnerships as an important vehicle to involve all the countries and regions of the Baltic Sea area in a joint effort to make it a sustainable and well-to-do place and hope for a reinvigorated approach to it basing on the 20-year practice;

- supporting the ambition to achieve an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and people in Europe, limiting inequalities while paying attention to the diversity of places the BSSSC looks forward towards the new Territorial Agenda 2030 to be adopted by the end of 2020. We call for a strong involvement of regional and local level as well as civil society as a guarantee of its success;

- BSSSC has followed with hope and appreciation the work on the revised Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to be adopted by the end of 2020. We hope it will provide instruments to address the new global challenges while securing transparency and true multilevel governance with sufficient regard to the regional and local level. We look with interest to the establishment of the Baltic Sea Strategy Point while expressing our satisfaction with a multi-partner solution within the Let's Communicate project while providing communication and information services;

- BSSSC looks with appreciation to the new edition of the Strategy of North-Western Federal District of Russian Federation and hopes that this strategic document together with the EU Strategy for the BSR will provide a good platform for joint actions for the sake of the BSR as a whole. We appreciate the cooperation with our Russian partners in the BSSSC network;

- BSSSC looks forward to the online 11th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR "Towards a Decade of Innovation and Sustainability" on October 20th with its ambition to facilitate the creation of innovative multi-disciplinary teams to tackle the most pressing issues and to break the existing silos. We appreciate being a part of the debates;

- BSSSC welcomes the reform (the revised Terms of Reference of the CBSS and of the CBSS Secretariat) of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and its Bornholm Declaration of May 2020 and especially the wish to still improve cooperation with other international fora and formats active in the region, as well as its ambition to involve the youth more. We highly appreciate BSSSC role of a partner organisation and very good partner relations;

- BSSSC expresses its appreciation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference for its openness to inviting us to share our opinions and the constant link as a partner organisation;

- BSSSC supports the work of HELCOM for the sake of cleaner and healthier Baltic Sea while understanding the need to keep up sustainable and social activities in the area. We are looking forward with interest to the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan;

- BSSSC recognises the European Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2020 -2025 and its conviction that the EU must become more socially, and environmentally resilient in all its regions and cities as well as be closer to its people. We welcome the newly established CoR Interregional Group "Baltic Sea Macro-region 2020 – 2025" and hope for even stronger cooperation;

MAIN MESSAGES:

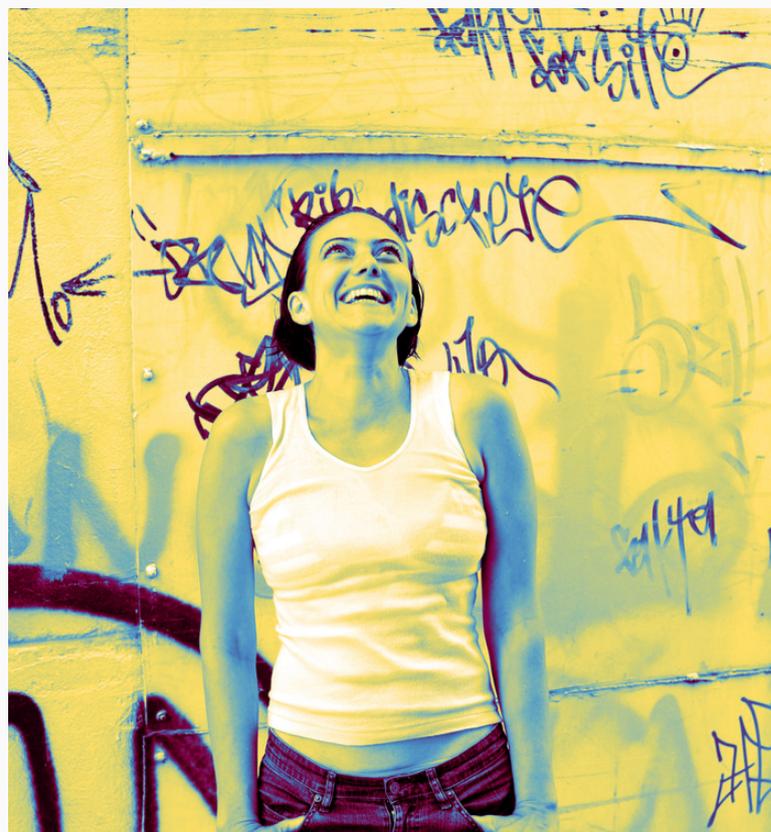
- BSSSC stands for strong involvement and empowerment of the youth. Therefore we continue providing fora for them to share and expand their knowledge and expand active involvement in the BSSSC and BSR activities through having a seat on the BSSSC Board but also contributing to initiatives such as the BSSSC Spring and Autumn Youth Events or the Baltic Sea Youth Camp.

Striving for a strong role of the youth in building a better united Europe and a more prosperous and sustainable BSR we express our high appreciation to the European Commission for its valuable youth-oriented initiatives and for noticing their increasing role in the new European policies. We are looking forward to the “Manifesto for Young People by Young People to Shape the European Territorial Cooperation” which is the result of the Dialogue on Youth and European Cooperation launched on June 23rd, 2020 by the European Commission and Interact Programme.

We are happy to have been involved in the discussions so far and look forward to even stronger youth involvement in innovative environmental and entrepreneurship themes.

- We highly value being a partner within the Baltic Sea Youth Platform established under the leadership of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and in cooperation with other Baltic Sea Region organisations. This platform is proof that dreams born during the Youth meetings can come true. For such initiatives to continue and the youth to be able to cooperate successfully well-constructed financial tools such as Erasmus +. are needed. We will strive for more efficient solutions in this direction.

- in view of the increasing role of the youth in the EU and BSR bodies' policies and governance the BSSSC commits to reinforce its youth network and try to establish stronger regional youth representation.



- meets with satisfaction the CBSS involvement in the area of Culture by taking over the lead for the Baltic Sea Cultural Cities project in its seed money phase. The project initiative aims at connecting cities, people and cultural actors in the region to strengthen BSR regional identity through promoting the rich cultural diversity of BSR cities and regions;

- calls to the European Commission and the Joint Programming Committee (JPC) of the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme to improve the funding opportunities for cultural projects in the upcoming funding period to facilitate numerous valuable initiatives;

- strongly supports the proposal of the European Commission[1] to add a new specific objective to the ERDF regulation aiming at “enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation” and calls upon the JPC to take account on this issue by setting up the new Baltic Sea Region Programme.

[1] COM/2020/452 final



REGARDING STATE OF THE BALTIC SEA - PLASTIC FREE SEA THE BSSSC:

- while being aware that COVID – 19 has resulted in new challenges, hopes that the European Strategy for plastics and in a broader sense the European Green Deal will result in decreased use of plastic, especially of single-use plastic items and in more efficient waste management;

- shares the opinion that “despite many benefits plastics provide us, we face a huge challenge in reducing our plastic waste and littering.

- To face this challenge the European Plastics Pact accelerates the shift towards the reuse and recycling of single-use plastic products and packaging". We see with satisfaction that the Pact offers a platform to exchange ideas, display good practices and discuss challenges;

-welcomes the initiative of the Netherlands and France who initiated the European Plastics Pact.

REGARDING INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY THE BSSSC:

- Supports the aim of 90% reduction in transport greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, while moving to more sustainable transport means and providing citizens with more affordable, accessible and cleaner alternatives;

- Welcomes the European Commission’s work on new Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy to meet the reduction target and ensure that the EU transport sector is fit for a clean, digital and modern economy.



- Greets with appreciation the Final Circular Economy package complete with the Report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan of 2015, A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe of 11th of March 2020 and the EU Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy;

-looks forward to the renewed mandate of the Coordination Group of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, a space to exchange and interact, to help engage with other stakeholders and stay up-to-date with developments;

- encourages all stakeholders to follow the 7R principle (Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Recover and Recycle). We need to be more aware of the whole process from resource acquisition/ extraction to the waste production and treatment, including the usage of water and energy as well as social aspects of forced and child labour;

- sees the importance of information and promotion campaign to make citizens aware of the need to change our mind-set to stop overconsumption with all its negative effects. Demand for exhaustive, reliable information on products' labels should be a must and customers should be made aware of the danger of "greenwashing";

-understands that developing new models of the economy forced by the climate crises and the new EU regulations should be seen as a chance and not a burden. Innovative approaches to raw materials should be the supported trend;

- sees the need to promote business and behavioural models that will bring textile production back to Europe and be produced locally;

Appreciating that we were able to have the BSSSC AC 2020 online, the BSSSC expresses the hope to be able to meet in 2021 in person at the extended invitation from the Kaliningrad Oblast

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