

Adopted by the BSSSC Board
17 September 2008, Kaunas Lithuania



BSSSC Resolution

At the 16th Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation (BSSSC) in Kaunas, Lithuania, 17 - 19 September 2008

The BSSSC Board has agreed on the following resolution:

1. BSSSC Annual Conference 2008

BSSSC expresses its thanks to the Kaunas Region for hosting the Annual Conference 2008.

The role of regions in making Europe the most dynamic, innovative and sustainable part of the world is increasingly appreciated. The BSSSC Annual Conference 2008 reflects this development in regard to the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). For the first time, BSSSC organises its event in co-operation with two EU institutions.

BSSSC appreciates the close and growing co-operation with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in its work. BSSSC is delighted that the 16th BSSSC Annual Conference is organised as a joint event with the CoR - as a part of the “declaration of common interest” signed in February 2007.

The Annual Conference 2008 is focusing on the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC is very pleased to arrange one of the four Roundtables for the strategy work together with the European Commission DG Regional Policy. As the main objective of this year’s Annual Conference is to give sub-regional input to the work with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, BSSSC hopes that making this a joint event will give good synergies.

BSSSC underlines the importance of concrete actions and co-operation projects in the Baltic Sea Region. Regional and local authorities are important actors in initiating and implementing concrete activities that will be of utmost importance for the future development of the Region. We have to progress from visions to action! BSSSC supports project activities of strategic importance for the Baltic Sea Area and co-operate with the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007 – 2013 in its efforts. A Partner search Café constitutes one important activity in the frame of the Annual Conference in Kaunas.

2. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

BSSSC

- welcomes the outlook of an EU Baltic Sea Strategy concentrating on the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) as an area which provides a sustainable environment, economic and social prosperity, that is attractive and accessible and guarantees safe conduct;
- urges the European Commission to propose an action plan that not only points to the necessary activities and projects, but also names the responsible authorities and institutions as well as the method of implementation and financial instruments. To strengthen the commitment for the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, the BSSSC suggest the introduction of a method similar to “the Open Method of Coordination”, which is successfully used in the EU to realise implementation of other fields of policies. BSSSC underlines that local and regional authorities have extensive experience with implementation of other EU-strategies and that also private actors in the region can play an important role in the implementation process;
- appreciates a close link between the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the European Maritime Policy, because an integrated, inter-sectoral approach to the maritime policy in the Baltic Sea Region is necessary. The BSR has the necessary potential to become a "maritime best practice region" in Europe and globally;
- calls for a close link between the “Adapting to climate change in Europe - options for EU actions” and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Region will face the impact of climate change at an early stage and with great impact on our fragile marine environment. The BSR could be developed into a model region for coping with climate change at a regional level;
- underlines that the potential of the BSR can only be fully developed in co-operation with neighbouring states such as Russia and Norway, as they participate in the positive development of the Region. They play a significant role in the practical regional and cross-border co-operation, and these neighbouring states should therefore be an integrated part of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy;
- recommends that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should also take note of the need for close co-operation with structures in the neighbouring areas, such as the North Sea and the Barents Euro Arctic Regions.

BSSSC has taken the initiative to co-ordinate a joint input to the work with the EU Strategy with the other Baltic Sea organisations, and this year’s Annual Conference is part of this initiative. BSSSC underlines that the strategy should encourage BSR organisations and networks to streamline the array of existing structures in order to strengthen their impact and to avoid double work.

3. BSSSC – contributions to shaping the future Baltic Sea Region

Transport and infrastructure

BSSSC supports the need for a joint strategy on infrastructure and transport covering the entire Baltic Sea Region (BSR); one that bridges national borders, national planning and transport policies, and looks for the most effective and environmentally sustainable transport solutions. The goal should be to develop a coherent transport system throughout the BSR where different modes of transport collaborate, and one that includes good transport connections to neighbouring areas.

BSSSC

- underlines the necessity to promote and strengthen connectivity within the different parts of the BSR to accomplish integration in the entire region – and to promote an optimal linking of the BSR transport networks with other EU regional networks as well as with the international transcontinental transport corridors as additional measure to worldwide seabound transport;
- calls for a clear emphasis on growth of seaborne transport as the most sustainable transport mode. Given the geographical situation of our regions around the Baltic Sea, transport via ships is the natural solution for our logistical needs. EU Projects like the “Motorways of the Sea” or the upcoming “European Maritime Space without barriers” should be implemented with the Baltic Sea as a model region;
- stresses that long term sustainable transport solutions in the BSR should include easy access to change between different modes of transport; goods transport from road to rail and sea. Technical development and regulatory systems should stimulate environmentally sustainable solutions and infrastructure that make sea and rail transports reasonable alternatives to transports on road and air;
- underlines that competence within the transport sector should be raised through research and education. BSSSC structures should be promoted to improve co-operation and interaction between actors within the transport sector;
- recommends that special attention should be given to improve connections by air (passenger transport) between the different parts of the Baltic Sea region.

Maritime policy

BSSSC will continue its engagement for an ambitious implementation of the European Maritime Policy in the Baltic Sea Region and to develop the BSR into Europe’s maritime best practice region by 2015.

BSSSC

- welcomes the EU Commission’s Blue Paper on Maritime Policy with its attendant Action Plan and the decision of the European Council of December 07 to implement this policy in the European Union;
- appreciates the EU Commission’s concept to conduct the implementation specific to maritime regions and will contribute to the implementation in the BSR at regional level;
- urges the EU Commission to bring together the maritime stakeholders and regional actors in order to co-ordinate the implementation process;
- calls for the CBSS- as the accepted body for political coordination in the region – to take the responsibility and to establish a Task Force on Maritime Policy which should act as an umbrella for the other BSR organizations;
- will support and initiate exemplary maritime projects which could serve as models for an integrated maritime policy in the BSR (e.g. introduction of environmentally differentiated harbour dues, installation of ship-to-shore electricity supplies in the ports of the BSR);
- will contribute to raise a common Baltic Sea maritime identity by means of public awareness activities (e.g. on the occasion of the European Maritime Day on 20 May);
- will promote the objectives of protection of the marine environment in order to secure the economic power of the sea;
- urges the European Commission to stimulate promising maritime activities and project developments by awarding best practice prizes (e.g. for exemplary clean port projects, environmentally friendly shipping);

- will continue with its "Working Group on Maritime Policy" to stimulate and co-ordinate the BSR views on maritime policy affairs from the regional perspective, especially with regard to making the BSR a "maritime best practice region".

Sustainable development

It is the declared aim of BSSSC to focus on sustainable development in the BSR and to encourage all ongoing activities at regional and local level to be sustainable.

BSSSC

- stresses the need for integration of environmental objectives with economic and socio-economic goals in order to advance and strengthen the three interdependent pillars (economic, social and environmental) of sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Area, both, at the regional and national as well at international level;
- acknowledges the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, adopted by the Ministerial Conference in Krakow in November 2007, as an important step. BSSSC expresses the regional commitment and encouragement to implement measures agreed in the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) in order to reach and maintain good ecological status of the Baltic Sea;
- points out that political support is of utmost importance to ensure commitment to implement environmental objectives and to facilitate sufficient resources. BSSSC therefore urges the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) to keep support to the implementation of the BSAP as one of their priorities in order to secure development of National Action Plans until 2010;
- urges local and regional authorities to prioritise projects which contribute to the implementation of the BSAP. Commitment and strong support by national and international authorities for local and regional partners as owners of such projects are important. BSSSC sees the need to combine local, regional, national and international financing to secure successful projects.

Sustainable energy and climate change

The future energy needs in connection with the serious climate situation continues to be one of the major challenges for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), and calls for intensified co-operation. Based on the results from the Annual Conference 2007 in Turku (Finland), BSSSC took the initiative to establish a Joint Platform on Energy and Climate in the BSR in February 2008. The partners of this platform have agreed

- to enhance their capacity in the field of Energy and Climate in the BSR by joining forces;
- to convey a clear "Regional Energy and Climate message" to national and international authorities;
- to support ongoing and future regional projects, aiming to achieve a sound Energy and Climate Future of the BSR;
- to raise public awareness of Energy and Climate issues in the BSR.

Together with the other BSR organisations representing national, regional and local level, BSSSC

- underlines the need to co-ordinate and co-operate on strategies to achieve at least a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Involvement of local and regional actors is important to reach such a goal for the BSR;
- recommends strengthening the capacity to support and co-ordinate Baltic Sea regional energy co-operation and supply security in developing an integrated and optimized regional approach to the energy issues in the Baltic Sea Region, taking into account the various

energy mixes of the countries in the Region. For instance by strengthening the commitment to the BASREC co-operation and allocating the appropriate resources to the work;

- stresses the importance to speed up – by means of e.g. economic and political instruments – the promotion and actual implementation of renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy savings in all sectors in the Baltic Sea Region, and underline the positive research, job and business potentials of environmentally friendly technologies;
- regards special attention to safe conduct and transport of energy via the Baltic Sea of utmost importance to protect the fragile ecosystems of the Baltic and invites all partners involved to implement energy-transport-strategies acceptable for all littoral states of the Baltic Sea.

Public Health and Quality of Life

As with the rest of Europe, the BSR is confronted with changing social problems, especially regarding migration of young people from rural areas to the cities, unemployment, increasing alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness, lifestyle diseases and regional health inequalities. To meet these challenges joint and co-ordinated actions, involving national and regional authorities and international organisations, are strongly needed.

BSSSC will continue to work for a healthier and more prosperous Baltic Sea Region by

- supporting regional projects financed through the Second Programme of European Community action in the field of Health (2008-2013);
- contributing to better awareness about Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), its activities and funding opportunities through its Project Pipeline by information dissemination;
- ensuring participation of BSSSC sub-regions in various Expert Groups of the NDPHS;
- taking further steps in establishing a BSSSC Working Group on Public Health and Social Well-being and contributing to the project implementation within NDPHS by using the capacity of sub-regions in the BSR as well as the future WG on Public Health;
- supporting BSSSC's WG on Youth Policy in its healthy lifestyle-rewarding activities and its representation in other BSR and European networks dealing with relevant topics.

Youth Policy

Being a cornerstone of future development in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), youth policy is given high priority by the BSSSC. Youth exchange, initiatives and youth empowerment are important factors in creating a common, long-term, space of successful co-operation in the BSR.

BSSSC will continue to

- include a youth perspective into the organisation's policy areas by working to include the Youth Networks representatives in all BSSSC working groups, where possible;
- ensure full membership of representatives from the youth team in the BSSSC Board;
- strive to involve all regions in the youth co-operation and encourage all sub-regions to promote youth policy as a key factor of regional development;
- give support to its Working Group on Youth Policy in its efforts to develop a common platform for discussion and initiatives for regional youth representatives within the BSSSC network/BSR.

Strengthening tolerance and intercultural dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region

Being confident that throughout the centuries one of the major treasures of Europe has been cultural diversity and that principles of tolerance are a guarantee of safeguarding democratic societies acknowledging the right of every person to respect of his/her human dignity,

BSSSC will

- pay special attention to the duty of authorities at various levels to develop and encourage respect for human rights and basic freedoms for all regardless of race, religion, language or nationality;
- strive to create long-term and reliable mechanisms for effectively counteracting extremism on the grounds of interethnic, interfaith and intercultural relations as well as formation of tolerant awareness and behaviour.

BSSSC

- appeals to subregions of the Baltic Sea states to establish close co-operation in the sphere of strengthening of tolerance and struggle against xenophobia and related discrimination;
- calls upon public organisations, civil society structures to implement projects promoting ethno-cultural tolerance;
- suggests further developing international co-operation in the sphere tolerance strengthening and intercultural dialogue and requests permanent meetings on these issues at a regular basis.

4. Cohesion Policy and territorial co-operation post 2013

The BSSSC welcomes the Commission's initiative to open the debate on the EU cohesion policy after 2013 at an early stage. As one of the most dynamic regions in the world, the cohesion policy will continue to play an important role in the process to stimulate economic growth and social change in the Baltic Sea Region.

BSSSC stresses that

- the cohesion policy should continue the co-operation between various levels of governance;
- the instruments supporting EU-Russia co-operation are closely interlinked with the structural funds. Interoperability between ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) is crucial and of utmost importance for the functioning of co-ordinated co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region;
- the structural funds programmes must be linked closely to the Lisbon strategy and the Gothenburg agenda – and continuously focus on improved sustainable economic growth, competitiveness and job creation, in order to be well prepared to meet the future conditions and challenges on a globalised and liberalised world market;
- the whole EU territory shall still be eligible for structural funds support. The programmes of the least favoured regions (Objective 1) will need to focus on economic goals, whereas other programmes (Objectives 2 and 3) should continue to focus on growth, innovation and job creation on the one hand, and at the same time increase focus on sustainability and social responsibility, taking into account the specific geographical features of the regions. The transnational programmes should contribute to co-operation between national, regional and local authorities cross borders for finding common solutions;
- integrated regional cohesion interventions are indispensable in order to allow the regions to make long-term regional development strategies in relation to the possibilities of the EU financing and programming instruments. At the same time, the subsidiarity and partnership principles must be applied in the administration of the structural funds programmes.

5. Northern Dimension and co-operation with Russia

Russian regions are indispensable partners in the Baltic Sea Region co-operation and BSSSC has successfully focused on strengthening the involvement of Russian sub-regions and actors in the work of the organisation.

The Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy and the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document gave the Northern Dimension a new platform of co-operation between the EU member states, Russia, Norway and Iceland.

Based on the intention of the Northern Dimension (ND) to involve as many actors and stakeholders as possible in the co-operation, BSSSC has advocated for a regional dimension within the ND framework. As a result of BSSSC's engagement, a questionnaire has been developed to find out what forms of co-operation are taking place at regional level in North-east Europe today and, even more important, what objectives and priorities would regional actors appreciate to follow and realise. The Steering Group ND has asked BSSSC to help conducting this consultation process on behalf of the Steering Group.

BSSSC will continue to strive for sub-regional involvement in the ND co-operation and will co-operate closely with the CoR in its efforts.

6. Co-operation with other organisations

The Baltic Sea Region is distinguished by a large array of international, national and regional/local governmental and non-governmental organisations and networks. This shows a large commitment asset and demonstrates the readiness of many stakeholders to engage in Baltic Sea co-operation. But better coordination of the efforts is needed to develop the Baltic Sea Region. This will gain all the existing actors and help lifting the region into the future.

BSSSC

- underlines the necessity for a comprehensive and co-operative approach in developing and putting-into-practice the new actions in the Baltic Sea Region (for example through the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region);
- welcomes the decision made by the heads of states and governments in Riga in June to reform the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and to make the organisation more action oriented. The five prioritised areas are very much in line with the BSSSC priorities and this will hopefully open up for synergies in our future work. BSSSC looks on CBSS as an important coordinating body of all interests in the Baltic Sea Region and is happy to continue as a strategic partner of CBSS in the future;
- will co-operate and work closely with other policy formulating Baltic Sea organisations on local, regional and national level in order to gather mutual political strength in various political positions and to avoid duplication of work. This includes initiating and taking part in political coordination groups and/or common WG on specific topics together with other organisations.

7. Future of BSSSC

BSSSC will continue to act as a political network organisation open to all regions in the Baltic Sea Area bringing added value to regional co-operation on every side of the Baltic Sea. BSSSC will be a co-operation partner to other BSR organisations on national, regional and local level and will continue to advocate the views of sub-regions to national authorities and European

Union institutions. The period of Norwegian Chairmanship will expire at the end of 2008 and the City of Hamburg will take over the Chairmanship for the period 2009 – 2010.

For the first time BSSSC has made a long term plan for the chairmanships and running of the organisation. The West-Pomeranian Region has indicated to take the leadership of BSSSC for the period 2010 – 2012. A co-operation platform (“troika”) of the outgoing, the incoming and the next chairmanship will be formed. This will secure a stable and long term focus in the BSSSC activities and engagements – contributing to the future development of the Baltic Sea Region.

The BSSSC focus for 2008-2010 will be on public health, climate and energy, science and education, maritime policy and active youth participation. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as well as Northern Dimension and co-operation with Russia will also be high on the BSSSC agenda in the years to come.

8. BSSSC Annual Conference 2009

The 17th BSSSC Annual Conference will convene in Region Sealand, Denmark 14 - 15 October 2009.