

Resolution

The 9th Conference on
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation

Riga 25-27th October 2001

I

The 9th annual Conference of the BSSSC convened in Riga, Latvia, on October 25-27th, 2001 at the invitation of the Chairman of the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia and the Chairman of the De-velopment Council of Riga Region.

Representatives of regions from the Baltic Sea countries - Denmark, Es-tonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden have gathered to discuss developments in the Baltic Sea Region and the role of the decentralised level in it, concentrating in particular on the following issues: Baltic Sea Region in the process of EU enlarge-ment, Baltic Sea Region becoming a European model region, Develop-ment and co-operation perspectives of the Baltic Sea Region as well as the Northern Dimension.

II

There is a need to strengthen the potentials and perspectives of the Baltic Sea Region as well as Baltic Sea cooperation in itself and for stronger in-tegration between east and west in the Region in order to create a sus-tainable region. This is vital both for the Region and for Europe as a whole. In this process active participation not only of the international and national levels but also from the regional level is necessary. The con-ference welcomes the new structured dialogue between BSSSC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR). This dialogue opens the opportunity to strengthen the influence of Baltic Sea interests at the European level.

There is not only a need for urgent action to adapt governance under the existing treaties, but also for a broader debate on the future of Europe in view of the next Inter-Governmental Conference based on openness, par-ticipation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.

BSSSC and its regions are indispensable partners in this process. Al-though the role of the regions has gradually been strengthened, there still exists a large unused potential for achieving added value through inter-re-gional involvement and cooperation.

Important European issues such as implementation of Good Governance, Northern Dimension Action Plan, Second Cohesion Report, VASAB 2010+ Action Program, Northern eDimension and

Baltic 21 constitute a platform for direct involvement of regions and will not succeed without regional initiatives.

BSSSC welcomes the decision of the PHARE Management Committee to continue with the budget line on "Co-operation in the Baltic Sea" (B 7 - 0311) to foster small projects in the applicant countries of the Baltic Sea. As well, the conference appreciates to co-relate INTERREG and PHARE. BSSSC takes this move as a sign that the EU Commission has finally grasped the importance of such cooperation in the Baltic Sea Re-gion. The Conference calls upon regions to make active use of these fa-cilities. In this context the conference stresses the need to erase still exist-ing barriers due to maritime borders when applying EU-programs for transnational co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. Recognition of the potential of the Baltic Sea Region should lead to a financial commitment from all Baltic Sea States channeled through the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The Fund for "Sub-regional Co-operation in the Bal-tic Sea Area" will have a strong bearing on obtaining a sustainable re-gion.

There is a need for a common understanding in the Baltic Sea Region of which policies are most effective in realizing the economic opportunities in the Region and how assistance policy can best be targeted in order to play an effective role in this endeavor. The objective is to create an envi-ronment for businesses throughout the Baltic Sea Region in which trade and investment is able to sustain itself and develop.

As far as nature protection and environment is concerned it is a tremen-dous challenge to achieve sustainability all over the Baltic Sea Region. To a large extent, regions have the competences within nature protection and environment as well as physical and spatial planning issues. Regions must play a substantial role in the whole process from planning to im-plementation and follow-up. The conference emphasizes the need for in-tegrated regional planning in the coastal zone of the Baltic Sea Region focusing on the restoration of the ecological balance of nature and environment. In this context the conference recommends, i.e. to the sub-regions, their participation in the coastal zone project, developed for IN-TERREG III B funding by VASAB 2010.

Initiatives such as Baltic 21, as well as the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, can only be carried through by involving regions in an integrated process among all relevant actors, national gov-ernments and organizations.

Within education and youth, policy participation of young people and children has to be secured with appropriate methods. Only through an early participation at the local and regional level in everyday life can young people learn democratic procedures and the value of taking part in elections and the importance of pursuing interests.

Baltic Sea national governments and the EU-Commission are urged to

involve regional and local levels in all EU-related matters which affect the decentralized level, especially in the complex process of the EU-enlargement. In this regard the conference welcomes the Commission's White Paper on "European Governance", which starts a new interaction with regional and local levels and civic society. BSSSC will take part in this interaction. It will actively participate in the discourse about the objectives of the White Paper.

III

The Conference - taking into account the political developments of the Baltic Sea Region recalls and welcomes:

- * the Conclusions of the 3rd Baltic Sea Summit of Heads of Governments in Kolding (2000) and especially the emphasis given there to subregional and cross-border co-operation as complementing the coming EU enlargement processes and the development of the EU's Northern Dimension;
- * The Resolution of the 8th Conference on Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation held in Pärnu, Estonia - October 2000;
- * The publication by the EU Commission of the White Book on European Governance;
- * Adoption of The European Convention on Human Rights (Nice, 2000);
- * the Action Plan for the Northern Dimension endorsed by the EU Council in Feira in 2000;
- * the Action Plan for the Period 2000-2001 adopted by the ministers in charge of trade and economic co-operation of the Baltic Sea States in Bergen (2000);
- * the Wismar Declaration on transnational spatial planning and development policies for the Baltic Sea Region to 2010, adopted at the Fifth Conference of Ministers for spatial planning and development in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region (September 2001) and especially the view that transnational co-operation on sustainable spatial development is considered as strategic approach to foster integration and competitiveness around the Baltic Sea;
- * the European Spatial Development Perspective - Towards Balanced and Sustainable Territory of the EU;
- * the eEurope initiative launched in 1999 and the Communication "eEurope - An Information Society" for all adopted by the EU Commission as well as the related eEurope+ initiative together with respective actions plans;
- * the Baltic 21 programme;
- * the Communiqué of the 10th CBSS Ministerial Session in Hamburg (2001), in particular the emphasis paid to necessary "support for improved cross-border and sub-regional co-operation for the further development of the Baltic Sea Region" as well as attention to the fact that "the active involvement of regional organisations is crucial to achieving the goals of Northern Dimension";
- * the ambitious work of the CBSS on compiling its list of "priorities and projects" related to the implementation of the EU Action Plan on

Northern Dimension;

- * the continued support by both the German and Russian CBSS presidencies to the decentralised level co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region;
- * the Swedish EU Presidency involvement in the implementation of the Northern Dimension initiative;
- * the Joint declaration of the President of the EU Commission and the President of the CoR and the Protocol governing arrangements for co-operation between the EU Commission and the CoR signed in September 2001 which aim at increasing the role of the subregional level represented in the CoR in the EU decision making processes;
- * the II Cohesion Report which launches the discussion on future of regional policy;
- * the opening (promoted by the CBSS CSO) of the IT portal for SMEs at the Conference on Economic Co-operation in Berlin (2001);
- * the decision taken by the 10th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) in Greifswald (2001) to further develop its co-operation framework on a permanent basis as well as its call to the CBSS and its own parliaments "to support the development of a stable civil society and to strengthen the sense of citizenship and democracy in the Baltic Sea Region";
- * the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) General Conference Resolution as well as the Social Charter for Member Cities of the Union of the Baltic Cities adopted in Rostock (2001).

IV

The Conference - with a view to the coming EU enlargement and the re-lated Northern Dimension initiative:

- * called on the EU Commission to actively involve all the Baltic Sea Region actors of relevance in the bi-annual Northern Dimension meetings foreseen by the report on the Northern Dimension given to the EU Summit held in Göteborg (June 2001);
- * welcomed the initiative "Northern eDimension Action Plan" launched by the CBSS in close partnership with the EU Commission;
- * appreciated the work of the EU Commission to merge INTERREG and PHARE CBC which is a sign that that EC has grasped the importance of the Baltic Sea Region co-operation;
- * called on the EU to meet the needs of the regions in the candidate countries in the pre-accession process, in particular by financing projects able to improve capacities on the regional level;
- * called on the governments of the Baltic Sea Countries to actively involve the respective regions in national politics on the issues having impact on the regional level, including the EU enlargement processes;
- * stressed the need to overcome still existing barriers for balanced access to EU programmes available for transnational co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region, namely INTERREG IIIB, PHARE and TACIS. As outlined by the EU Commission late 2000, a possible way could be to submit existing PHARE funding to the regulatory frameworks of EU

Structural Funds; with regard to balanced participation in INTER-REG IIIB, this requires to submit the PHARE-CBC Baltic Sea Region programme (or alternatively: a share of national PHARE budgets) to the regulatory framework of INTERREG IIIB (Baltic Sea Region);

- * with regard to this called on Baltic Joint Co-ordination Committee (BJCC) to meet these challenges in due time by fulfilling its co-ordinating tasks;

- * called on the regions and other relevant Baltic Sea Region actors to make sufficient use of the new INTERREG IIIB programme with a view to the necessary process of "region building" in the Baltic Sea Region;

- * stressed the need to build up stronger co-operation with Barents Euroarctic region under the Northern Dimension concept;

- * welcomed the EU enlargement processes in the Baltic Sea Region and the recent Russian CBSS presidency suggestion to find a solution to the special situation of the Kaliningrad Oblast;

- * welcomed the results of the BSSSC Conference "The Northern Dimension and Kaliningrad Oblast - contributions by subregional co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region" arranged in March 2001 in close co-operation with Schleswig-Holstein and Eastern Norway County Network and called for continuation of this initiative;

- * with regard to this, stressed the readiness of Baltic Sea regions to be involved in the work aiming at creating a cohesive Region.

V

The Conference -contributing to the Baltic Sea Region becoming a European model region:

- * welcomed the initiative to hold a meeting of Chairpersons of the Baltic Sea Region organisations and structures on the occasion of the BSSSC annual conference and called for it to become a rule with the result of obtaining better synergy of Baltic Sea Region co-operation;

- * welcomed the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce (BCCA) initiatives aiming at increasing the economic potential of the Baltic Sea Region;

- * called on the regions of the Baltic Sea Area and the BSSSC bodies to participate actively in the discussion on the future of the regional policy, opened with the publication of the II Cohesion Report, to help shape the most favourable development of the Baltic Sea Region;

- * called on the regions of the Baltic Sea Area and the BSSSC bodies to participate in the discussion on European Governance and through broader implementation of the best practices to be found in the Baltic Sea Region to ensure still more effective democratic rule and grass-roots approach in the Region;

- * welcomed the initiatives related to youth involvement in the Baltic Sea Region activities and development;

- * welcomed the initiatives of non-governmental organisations to establish a broad Baltic network and thus be stronger in the Baltic Sea family as expressed at conferences in Copenhagen and Lübeck and in their call for closer co-operation with the CBSS.

VI

The Conference - having the goal to use the development and co-operation potential of the Baltic Sea Region:

- * stressed the need to enhance joint efforts on economic development and related issues in order to promote the Baltic Sea Region as a strongly competitive subregion in the enlarged EU;
- * welcomed the initiative of arranging the Information Day and Partner Search Forum seminar alongside the BSSSC conference;
- * welcomed the CBSS CSO decision to have one of its regular meetings alongside the BSSSC conference and calls for this to become a rule;
- * welcomed the initiative to establish the Baltic Association of Regional Development Institutions (BARDI) which took place on the occasion of the BSSSC annual conference and called on the Baltic Sea regions to support this body;
- * welcomed the initiative of the Baltic Development Forum to launch the Baltic Rim Regional Agenda (Malmo 2000) whose goal is to find a higher degree of regional integration and co-operation for the Baltic Sea Region to become the leading growth centre;
- * welcomed the work of the euroregions operating in the Baltic Sea Region and called on the EU Commission to continue the financial support for this valuable form of co-operation.

VII

The Conference -involving the Baltic Sea Region in European and national developments:

- * called on the EU Commission to continue in its work towards supporting the Baltic Sea Region co-operation - preferably in the form of defining the Baltic Sea Region as one co-operation region which would significantly encourage even stronger contacts between the various Baltic Sea Region partners;
- * called on the Baltic Sea Region national authorities and the EU Commission to involve regional and local levels in all the EU related matters which affect the decentralised level. This is especially important as the complex process of the EU enlargement gets underway;
- * called upon the national authorities to involve regional representatives in the CBSS ministerial meetings;
- * called on all the relevant bodies to continue in their efforts towards building the knowledge based society which is the necessary precondition for a successful new economy;
- * called on the BSSSC regions to participate actively in the planned BSSSC INTERREG IIIB project aimed at strengthening the Baltic Sea Region co-operation and using its development capacity.

VIII

The Conference

- * welcomed as guests Mr Romualds Razuks - Head of the Latvian Delegation to the Baltic Assembly, Mr Janis Krumins - Latvian Minister of Special Assignments for Public and Municipal Reform, Mr Roberts Zile - Latvian Minister of Special Assignments for Co-operation with International Financing Agencies, Mr Maris Zvaigzne - Adviser from Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Alexey Obukhov - Chairman of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials, Mr John Beale - EU Commission, DG Information Society, as well as other representatives of the governments of the Baltic Sea Region countries, EU Commission, CBSS, BSPC, BCCA, Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, EU CoR;
- * expressed high appreciation for the work and involvement of Anders Engström - first President of the UBC - for the Baltic Sea Region development and wished the new UBC President - Mr Per Bodker Andersen successful continuation of the endeavours for the Baltic Sea Region;
- * thanked the CBSS for its efforts towards a more co-ordinated Baltic Sea Region co-operation and called on the Baltic Sea Region organisations to continue their work aimed at increasing the synergy of numerous Baltic Sea activities;
- * thanked the CoR for inviting the BSSSC to its sessions and called on the CoR for a still stronger involvement of the BSSSC into its work;
- * thanked the Hanse Office in Brussels for its involvement in the Baltic Sea affairs and working as the BSSSC antenna in Brussels;
- * thanked Riga (Latvia) for hosting this year's annual Conference and the sponsors and donors of this Conference for their financial contributions;
- * thanked the EU Commission for support given to the BSSSC and this year's annual conference by co-financing the project "Strengthening of Regional Co-operation Network - Towards the BSSSC Conference";
- * gratefully accepted the invitation of Eastern Norway County Network to host and to arrange the 10th BSSSC Conference to be held at Lillehammer on 24-26th October 2002.