



BSSSC Annual Conference Resolution 2018

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The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network organisation for decentralised authorities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). BSSSC acts as an open, non-party political platform, which represents the interests of all sub-regions around the Baltic Sea — promoting common political ideas with a joint regional approach.

Main messages

- BSSSC stresses the need to base our work on solidarity, democracy, rule of law, common identity and on the fact that we need each other to prosper and grow. The countries and regions in the BSR are dependent on each other more than ever before - to find solutions to the big societal challenges, such as climate change and immigration as well as care for the environment in the sea and on land and demographic change.
- BSSSC welcomes the paper from the CBSS Vision Group and supports the need for the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) to be a stable forum for unhindered communication about common problems and an important vehicle to building trust and confidence in the BSR.
- BSSSC believes that the proposal tabled by the EU Commission for the MFF of the European Union (EU) after 2020 is a good starting point. BSSSC urges the Member States and EU institutions to conclude the negotiations before the European Parliament elections 2019.
- BSSSC regrets that the European Commission intends to reduce the overall funds for European Territorial Cooperation as well as its portion of funds relative to the Cohesion Policy envelope.
- BSSSC is very concerned about the European Commission's proposal to integrate maritime cross-border programmes into transnational programmes (INTERREG component 2).
- BSSSC recognises the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation with regions in Russia despite the political situation on national and supranational levels. BSSSC welcomes the opportunity to cooperate in concrete projects with Russian partners through the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme as well as within the cross-border programmes.
- The EUSBSR constitutes an important basis for the actions of BSSSC and its regions, and the BSSSC will continue to advocate the interests of the sub-regions and the youth of the Baltic Sea Region towards the strategy's governance structures.
- BSSSC will strive for the youth to get a fixed role, place and influence in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region after 2020 and calls on the Policy Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Coordinators of the EUSBSR to include youth into their work.
- BSSSC recalls the Baltic 2030 Action plan and recommends that sustainable development should be mainstreamed in all activities of countries and regions in the BSR, and that the upcoming revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan is based on the SDGs.
- The BSSSC regions plead for better exploiting the potential of culture for integrating the region. In times of growing populism and increasing nationalism, it is more important than ever to better demonstrate that the European project is more than an economic idea and a monetary union.
- The Blue Economy has a significant importance for the whole Baltic Sea Area. BSSSC is worried about the proposed cuts in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and wishes that EU would continue the funding of the Blue Economy also in the future.



The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) was founded 25 years ago in Stavanger, Norway with the purpose to expand sub-regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and with the aim of supporting democracy and sustainable economic development. Cooperation in the BSR has matured over the years, and BSSSC as a political network organisation of sub-regions, constantly aims at contributing constructively to this development. The importance of people-to-people contacts on all levels - promoting solidarity and co-operation in the region - was underlined in the Stavanger Declaration and this remains valid.

The Baltic Sea Region consists of communities with shared values and attitudes, built upon its diverse cultural heritage and committed to a common peaceful future. The BSR has been a place of intense cultural exchange for thousands of years and inter-cultural dialogue is a key tool in promoting the building of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies. The political landscape in Europe and in the Baltic Sea Region remains demanding - with challenges such as; citizens' lack of trust in the political systems with movements towards nationalism and centralisation, infringements of civil liberties and threats to the independence of the judiciary, unsolved migration issues, reintroduction of border controls, climate change and poor environmental status of the sea.

BSSSC stresses the need to base our work on the Sustainable Development Goals including solidarity, democracy and the rule of law, common identity and on the fact that we need each other to prosper and grow. We must work together to secure a greener, cleaner and more climate friendly region. We need to invest in infrastructure, research and education for a better accessible and smarter region. New ways of thinking and innovative approaches are needed in many areas of life, be it in managing scarcer resources, climate change or in dealing with social and political tensions. Cultural interventions can offer new attention to old problems.

BSSSC welcomes the paper from the CBSS Vision Group and supports the need for the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) to be a stable forum for unhindered communication about common problems and an important vehicle to building trust and confidence in the BSR. BSSSC strongly supports the recommendation of the CBSS member states to convene Foreign Ministers meetings on a yearly basis. BSSSC stresses the role of CBSS to improve cooperation with all fora and formats in the region - as highlighted by the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives in Stockholm on 18 June - and confirms its readiness to continue the good dialogue and close cooperation with CBSS.

With regard to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Cohesion Policy, post 2020

BSSSC believes that the proposal tabled by the EU Commission for the MFF of the European Union (EU) after 2020 is a good starting point. The proposal's close link to the political priorities of the Union of 27 is correct and expedient. In light of its constantly growing significance and numerous new challenges, the EU should be provided with appropriate funding. BSSSC urges the Member States and EU institutions to conclude the negotiations before the European Parliament elections 2019.

BSSSC regrets that although the European Commission recognises the significant European value added by the European Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG), it simultaneously, however, intends to reduce its overall funds as well as its portion of funds relative to the Cohesion Policy envelope. The INTERREG funding makes a significant contribution to European integration and to fostering good neighbourly coexistence in Europe.



Therefore, financial allocation for INTERREG should be envisaged for the upcoming MFF that corresponds at least to that of the current funding period.

BSSSC welcomes the strengthening of transnational programmes in areas with a Macro Regional Strategy (MRS) and the measure to increase the alignment between funding and MRS priorities. The proposal to treat Member States, third countries and partner countries on equal footing in the INTERREG programmes is well received by BSSSC. BSSSC also finds the proposal to allocate funding to people-to-people actions and enhancing sustainable democracy in transnational cooperation programmes very valuable. This is in line with the BSSSC policy paper on culture that underlines that a vivid and attractive cultural life in European regions must have high priority and should be highlighted in all EU-policies. BSSSC stresses that funding of small-scale projects in the fields of culture, intercultural exchange and the promotion of democracy and tolerance should be part of all INTERREG programmes. BSSSC welcomes the important role of smart specialisation in innovation based economic growth.

BSSSC is very concerned about the European Commission's proposal, to integrate maritime cross-border programmes into transnational programmes (INTERREG component 2). Maritime cross-border programmes have created clear added value, and these programmes, run by regional authorities, have strongly increased local and regional actors' participation in EU-funded cooperation. This again has fostered the principle of subsidiarity, multilevel governance and local engagement in the Baltic Sea Region.

While supporting the opening of mainstream ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) programmes for transnational cooperation, BSSSC regrets that the European Commission proposes to discontinue the INTERREG Europe programme in the new funding period. BSSSC stresses that INTERREG Europe is the only programme enabling regions to cooperate with other regions all over Europe.

BSSSC supports all suggestions made by the Commission on simplification in the context of funding from ERDF, CF (Cohesion Fund), ESF (European Social Fund) and EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). However, the EU Commission should further substantiate this and actually find more forms of relief for administrative authorities as well as for the beneficiaries of the funding.

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

BSSSC recognises the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation with regions in Russia despite the political situation on national and supranational levels. BSSSC welcomes the opportunity to cooperate in concrete projects with Russian partners through the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme as well as within the cross-border programmes.

BSSSC provides a sub-regional dimension and contribution to the ND work and stresses the importance of dialogue and cooperation between EU member regions, Norwegian and Russian regions. ND has an important role as a platform of cooperation in several policy areas (e.g. environment, transport, health and culture). BSSSC strongly supports the concrete work of the Partnerships and calls for better involvement of the sub-regions in the ND cooperation.



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

The EUSBSR constitutes an important basis for the actions of BSSSC and its regions, and the BSSSC will continue to advocate the interests of the sub-regions and the youth of the Baltic Sea Region towards the strategy's governance structures. BSSSC commits itself to contribute to the upcoming revision of the Action Plan and is ready to work more closely with relevant PAC/HACs as part of thematic platforms/partnerships in the future.

BSSSC will use its role as partner in organising the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2019 to highlight the importance of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Action Plan and to listen to and involve youth in the EUSBSR.

BSSSC stresses the need to ensure broad participation and commitment to the EUSBSR and welcomes the revision of the communication strategy. Local and regional authorities can be key actors in facilitating communication of results and good practice on the ground. BSSSC is urging the EUSBSR governing bodies to include the voice of local and regional actors in the revision process.

With regard to youth policy and youth involvement/participation

BSSSC acknowledges the youth of the Baltic Sea Region as important stakeholders when discussing the BSR today and tomorrow. Youth are more sensitive to many challenging issues - and through the way they live and communicate, they are very aware of changes taking place in the society.

BSSSC will strive for the youth to get a fixed role, place and influence in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region after 2020 and calls on the Policy Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Coordinators of the EUSBSR to include youth into their work.

BSSSC recalls the BSSSC Youth Spring meeting 2018 in Hämeenlinna (Finland), and will make use of the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration as a foundation for its further policy work. A dialogue between the young and old generation will be encouraged by using new methods for a constructive dialogue.

BSSSC encourages the national, regional and local governments to take into account the recommendations from the ReGeneration 2030 Summit in Åland – and supports the youth movement for change – in order to better achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. movement for change in the objective of ng

BSSSC welcomes the initiative of the EU Commission for a new EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027 with the purpose to engage, connect and empower youth. A renewed EU youth dialogue has to put the youth at the centre, and talk with youth - not to them.

With regard to BSSSC policy areas and the role of solidarity, participation and smart actions

BSSSC underlines that countries and regions in the BSR are dependent on each other more than ever before - to find solutions to the big societal challenges, such as climate change and immigration as well as care for the environment in the sea and on land and demographic change. Participation, collaboration and joint actions



of countries and regions are needed. Innovative approaches, use of new technologies and smart actions must be at the heart of our work.

In order to reach the full potential in circular bio-economy, BSSSC stresses that regions need to build functional ecosystem by unifying rural and urban regions. Bio-economy development creates business opportunities in both urban and rural areas with circular management of material flows and energy and effective innovation ecosystems. BSSSC believes that existing development projects and business examples in BSR deliver concrete experiments of innovation ecosystems as basis for continuous development together.

BSSSC strives for improved dialogue and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures in the Baltic Sea area. Together we can achieve more and make our voice heard on the national, macro-regional and in particular on the EU-level. A better coordination of political priorities and joint actions in fields of common interest will improve regional influence and at the same time make better use of limited resources.

Sustainable Development Goals - Baltic 2030 Action plan

BSSSC recalls the Baltic 2030 Action plan and recommends that sustainable development should be mainstreamed in all activities of countries and regions in the BSR, and that the upcoming revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan is based on the SDGs.

BSSSC commits to (or supports) the Baltic 2030 Action plan and will contribute to the follow up through its policy work and by participation in the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development.

Accessibility and green transport corridors

The BSSSC believes that the BSR Access project platform can play an important role in facilitating high quality, innovative and sustainable transport services along the TEN-T Core Network Corridors in the BSR, and can make these corridors drivers for accessibility and cohesion. As an associated partner in the platform, the BSSSC is committed to engage relevant stakeholders at the regional level, disseminate results and act as a channel for political recommendations from the platform.

The BSSSC welcomes that the draft CEF regulation for 2021 – 2027 is proposing to extend the Scan-Med corridor in North Jutland (DK) and to include the Kiel Canal (DE) in the North Sea-Baltic Corridor. BSSSC also strongly supports the proposal to extend the North Sea-Baltic Corridor to the north. Proposed extension of the North-Sea Baltic Corridor will connect the Finnish rail network with the Swedish core port of Luleå. The proposed extension anticipates growing importance of the Arctic and Baltic region policy and fosters economic growth in this economic area.

BSSSC calls on the European Parliament and the European Council to support these proposals of the Commission in conjunction with the final adoption of the regulation and the upcoming revision of the TEN-T.

The BSSSC believes that the alignment of the Scan-Med corridor should also include the section Oslo-Stockholm in line with the wishes of the Swedish Government, and requests the Parliament and the Council to add this section in the final version of the CEF regulation. The Oslo-Stockholm extension would create better



possibilities to connect two of Europe's most growing cities, and allow for shift of passengers and freight from road and air to rail - contributing to lower emissions in line with established climate objectives.

Culture at the heart of regional and European policy

The BSSSC regions plead for better exploiting the potential of culture for integrating the region. In times of growing populism and increasing nationalism, it is more important than ever to better demonstrate that the European project is more than an economic idea and a monetary union. The European Union has to convince its citizens of its founding vision for a community of shared values. Art, culture, and our common cultural heritage have a central relevance in this respect and for strengthening the European identity. Fostering intercultural dialogue, enhancing and displaying the cultural richness and diversity of the Baltic Sea Region can boost the "we-feeling" in the region and contribute to the region's internal unity.

Against that background, and in view of the discussions on the MFF after 2020, the BSSSC regions – EU and non-EU regions – are of the opinion that culture should become an inherent goal of the future EU Structural Funds policy, a possible thematic priority of Structural Funds programmes, a possible topic of Smart Specialisation and eligible within all ETC programmes.

Maritime Policy and Baltic Sea Action Plan

The Blue Economy has a significant importance for the whole Baltic Sea Area. BSSSC is worried about the proposed cuts in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and wishes that EU would continue the funding of the Blue Economy also in the future. In addition, the cross-border ETC programmes are very important for the Maritime sector. Blue Growth has a strong potential for sustainable business and innovations in many sub-regions in the Baltic Sea Area. For example clean tech, aquaculture and digitalisation, provide a positive input in increasing the prosperity of the whole area.

BSSSC will support the work of the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy of CBSS and will continue the cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group.

The updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) is the most important tool for improving the ecological status of the Baltic Sea. As an observer in HELCOM, BSSSC shares the vision on a healthy Baltic Sea environment connected with a wide range of sustainable economic and social activities. BSSSC wants to promote the implementation of the BSAP especially on the sub-regional level. For example clear water, safe maritime traffic and healthy wildlife have concrete effects on the sub-regions.

BSSSC Annual Conference 2019

The BSSSC thanks for the kind invitation from the Association of Klaipeda Region in Lithuania to convene the Annual Conference in September 2019 in Klaipeda.