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## A Competitive Region in a Globalized World

This Joint Position Paper on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is presented by BSSSC, B7 Baltic Islands Network, Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Development Forum, CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission and UBC – Union of the Baltic Cities.

Content of the position paper:

- A position paper with concrete areas of actions for the Baltic Sea Strategy
- A Model of Governance\*
- A summary of proposals for flagship projects supported by the six Baltic Sea organisations  
The concrete flagship project proposals are attached as an appendix to this document

\* BDF is not part of the proposal for the model of governance, as it is a private organisation.



## Position Paper on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

### A Competitive Region in a Globalized World

#### SUPPORT FOR A STRATEGY

BSSSC, B7 Baltic Islands Network, Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Development Forum, Union of the Baltic Cities and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission – hereafter mentioned as the Baltic Sea organisations - welcome that the European Commission is to submit a Baltic Sea Strategy. Through this position paper we would like to put forward our joint views on the content of the strategy.

The Baltic Sea organisations fully believe that the Strategy will ensure a joint and coordinated approach to the development of the Baltic Sea Region. We do believe that the strategy should include three essential elements; the strategy, an action plan and a plan for implementation.

An action plan will ensure concrete activities and initiatives that will enable the region to maintain and develop its growth potential. The Baltic Sea Region is among one of the world's most competitive regions. The region is capitalising on its strengths and making the most of its diversity to stimulate innovation, increase the skilled labour force and foster entrepreneurship and investments. The environment of the Baltic Sea Region needs to be protected through measures in order to preserve the biodiversity and quality of life of the region and at the same time maintain its long-term competitiveness. This will increase the attractiveness for settling, investment and tourism.

#### FORM of STRATEGY

The Baltic Sea Region consists of many different organisations and actors, but it is only through joint efforts and cooperation that the region will fully develop its potential. The Baltic Sea organisations therefore urge the Commission to make a strategy that not only points to the necessary actions as such but also name the responsible authorities and institutions and the method of implementation.

A plan for implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy is essential in order to specify the roles and responsibilities of the different actors in the region and thus make the strategy effective and relevant. The strategy should also include a timetable.

To follow the realisation of the Baltic Sea Strategy, the Baltic Sea Organisations suggest the introduction of a method similar to the Open Method of Co-ordination such as peer review, best practice and benchmarking, which is used in other fields of EU policies. All levels need to be included in the implementation process to ensure the anchoring of the strategy. Local and regional authorities, as well as euroregions and similar CBC structures, have extensive experience with implementation of other EU-strategies and also private actors can play an important role in the implementation process.



## CO-ORDINATION with NEIGHBOURING STATES

The Baltic Sea Strategy should be coordinated across state borders local, regional and state authorities as well as political institutions and the civil society (vertical integration). Improved coordination between sector policies such as business, education, environment, R&D, labour market as well as infrastructure (horizontal integration) will improve effectivity.

The strategy for the Baltic Sea Region needs to be developed in association with its neighbouring states such as Norway and Russia, as they play an important role in the development of the region and should therefore be included in the process.

In the following, eight important areas of action will be presented in relation to the four main objectives proposed by the Commission.

The areas of action are:

- Nature and environment
- Energy and climate
- Physical infrastructure
- Knowledge based infrastructure and a borderless region within R&D
- Economic and sustainable growth
- Human resources
- Intercultural dialogue and identity building
- Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

### **1. Improving the environmental state of the Baltic Sea Region, especially of the sea**

#### Nature and environment

The health of the Baltic Sea is seriously damaged due to excessive pollution, such as untreated human waste, agricultural fertilizers, toxic materials, and metals, which have resulted in eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea's biodiversity is threatened and the pollution is causing severe damage to the sea, which is an important source of economic, transport and recreational value for the countries along the coast and within its catchment area.

Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region must be based on sustainable principles, as the increasing human activities can harm marine and coastal areas. The Common Fisheries Policy should have a stronger focus on sustainability, and The Baltic Sea Strategy should be directly linked to the EU's Maritime Policy and HELCOM's maritime policy.

Growth opportunities of the region are dependent on a healthy environment. A poor environment will create economic and social problems. The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) was set up to coordinate both the implementation of the Helsinki convention and related improvements in environmental protection around the Baltic Sea. The strategy should support the Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan.



*Areas of action:*

- Initiatives for establishing a structure of BSR coastal zone planning for a healthier water environment with a focus on the large hot spots of pollution on land as well as discharge from small diffuse sources
- Coordinate tourism strategies for the Baltic Sea Region directed to the world tourism market.
- Strengthen effective response to environmental disasters, which also builds on a cross-sector approach, involving new actors and partners to be part of new environmental solutions
- The Baltic Sea Region as a pilot-testing area for some of the sustainability principles formulated in the report from the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG)

Energy and climate

The access to secure and cost-effective energy is essential for the development of the Baltic Sea Region. It is vital to promote the development of competitive energy markets, renewable and sustainable energy sources, and an infrastructure of energy production and supply that fosters competition. A more integrated regional energy market will also help solve important questions related to energy security.

Greenhouse gases by the energy sector must be considerably reduced over a number of years. The use of renewable energy and other environmentally friendly types of energy must therefore continue to grow.

The Baltic Sea regional authorities play an important role in the solutions to combat climate change as their tasks include public transport, transport infrastructures, energy production and networks, physical planning, energy efficiency and communication with the citizens.

Baltic Sea Region organisations endorsed the idea of joint coordination of activities in the field of energy and climate when they formed a common platform in February 2008. The platform will help the organisations to move in one common direction and avoid duplications in their activities. More information exchange and cooperation is needed in order to speak with one voice when it comes to the European and global challenges in the field of energy and climate change.

*Areas of action:*

- Increase the investment in research, development and demonstration of new energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technologies across the Baltic Sea Region
- Political focus on the provision of stable energy supplies
- The Baltic Sea as a model region for EU's goals for reducing the overall energy use
- A common strategy to combat climate change based on a multi stakeholder approach and through presentation of different scenarios for increased cooperation.



## **2. Making the Baltic Sea Region a more prosperous place by supporting balanced economic development across the Region**

### Economic and sustainable growth

The Baltic Sea Region is characterised by high growth rates in the new member states coupled with strong economies in the old members. The region has reached a prosperity level of 92% of the EU-25 average. But the region must prepare for increasing global competition and worsening demographics, which could lessen these advantages over time.

The general conditions for growth need to be strengthened. Both in concern of possibilities of trade, business, access to human resources and raw materials as well as the framework for the environment, energy efficiency and infrastructure. The level of trade and investments in the region should be increased through removal of obstacles and the development of supportive measures and conditions for further economic integration.

The single market does still not function sufficiently well in the Baltic Sea region, and therefore a further emphasis on border crossing conditions for goods and people, protection of intellectual property rights, conformity in standards and certification requirements, and the fight against corruption is needed.

Development in the Baltic Sea Region is still far from sustainable, and therefore increased and focused efforts are necessary to halt and reverse regional unsustainable trends, such as the excessive use and demand for energy, as well as the immoderate depletion of natural resources.

A strategy with these circumstances in mind would be able to give additional contribution in realizing the full economic potential of the region and make the Baltic Sea region even more competitive globally.

### *Areas of action:*

- In contact with the private sector initiate and support activities/measures to improve the BSR as an attractive market for international commercial investments
- Harmonisation of procurement rules and other national rules related to implementation of programmes under the cohesion policy
- Complete the Single Market by deleting the last transit barriers between the EU member states in the Baltic Sea Region

### Human resources

The Baltic Sea Region is characterised by having a skilled and well trained labour force and a population with a high educational level. The labour force has great potential, and the educational level plays a key role in this. Good opportunities for lifelong learning makes it possible for the region to be more flexible and for people to sustain and enhance their position in the labour market.

A well functioning internal labour market is a key demand of the Lisbon agenda, but there are still restrictions to the free movement of labour in the Baltic Sea Region. Not all countries in the Region have lifted their restrictions on the people of new member states joining the common internal labour



market. It is important to focus on the continued improvement of competences and skills related to the cross-regional strengths in the Baltic Sea Region.

This increasing demand for labour and the decline in the labour force across the Baltic Sea make it important also to focus on the attraction of foreign labour if the economic growth is to be sustainable. At the same time the Baltic Sea Strategy should also include issues such as integration, equality and demographic change.

The Baltic Sea Region is committed to the Bologna Declaration of 1999 but mutual recognition of vocational education and training skills is also an issue, which the Baltic Sea Strategy should focus further on.

*Areas of action:*

- There is a need for mapping the migration and supply and demand of skills and human capital in the Baltic Sea Region and therefore statistics or data sources need to be developed
- Joint efforts/investments to increase the supply of skills and human capital
- Further development of a mutual system of recognition of especially vocational education
- Development of common solutions against cross border barriers for a common labour market, based on experiences from existing CBC structures in the Baltic Sea Area
- Improving cross border mobility through procedures of visas issues

### **3. Making the Baltic Sea Region a more accessible and attractive place for both its inhabitants, for competent labour force and for tourists**

#### Physical infrastructure

An important element in making the Baltic Sea region competitive and ensure economic growth is a coherent transport system as well as an effective and sustainable infrastructure. Accessibility within and between the countries in the region is essential both in relation to economic growth and development as well as the domestic and foreign trade opportunities. Also import/export from Asia has great potential for further development in the region.

The key tasks are better use of existing transport infrastructure (e.g. better logistics, better inter-modality) removing certain bottlenecks, better connecting transnational and regional networks, paying more attention to specific elements of BSR transport system such as air and ferry transport and ports. Improving the control function of transports and developing an early warning system against accidents is needed.

The Baltic Sea itself poses challenges and there is a need for development of the ports and the infrastructure in the hinterland to ensure both the long distance international transport and the transport within the region. The opening of the Øresund Bridge in 2000 has led to obvious regional benefits and the bridge across Fehmarn belt is likely to bring new dynamics to the region not just in relation to the reduction of travel time but also for business and commerce.



The development of a Baltic Sea Strategy should be closely connected to the implementation of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy. An integrated, inter-sectoral approach to the maritime policy in the Baltic Sea Region is necessary. The region can be promoted as a maritime best practice region in Europe and globally due to not only the unique geographic conditions but also the experiences with joint approaches to the challenges of maritime transport in the Baltic Sea.

At the same time increased traffic means environmental strain. An important part of the development should be an EU strategy that could serve as an impetus for increased bi- and multilateral cooperation in tackling this issue. Environmentally sustainable intermodal transport helps the development of green corridors, facilitate contacts and help the system of cargo freight both at sea, on land and in the air.

There are several Interreg projects and TEN projects, which have dealt or are dealing with the issues of improving the infrastructure in the Baltic Sea Region in a sustainable way. A strategy for the region should therefore build on the experiences from the TEN-networks and other successful projects in the Baltic Sea Region.

*Areas of action:*

- Support of strategic initiatives and projects aiming at improved cooperation between all modes of transport in competitive and sustainable logistic chains – integrating the TEN-T corridors and the Motorways of the Sea in the Baltic Sea Region by East-West as well as North-South links.
- Integration of the legal and administrative transport conditions in the region
- Development of the physical land and sea infrastructure.
- Measures to intensify the monitoring of ships movement in the Baltic Sea
- Further measures to protect environmental vulnerability

Knowledge based infrastructure and a borderless region within R&D

Not only physical infrastructure is important in creating a competitive Baltic Sea Region, knowledge and IT based infrastructure plays just as important a role. If the region truly wants to be a strong competitive force globally, further investment in the area are needed. This issue is to improve the preconditions for competitive and sustainable transnational flows of goods in seamless logistic chains and network cooperation between all modes of transport

The education and R&D network should therefore be further developed to enable further mobility and knowledge transfer in the Baltic Sea Region. New industries are increasingly knowledge intensive, and it is necessary for the Baltic Sea Region to compete in knowledge, innovation and skills in order to attract new companies and continue the economic development of the region. There is already a developed platform for university cooperation, but the extensive network in the Baltic Sea Region should be increased in order to make the Baltic Sea the most innovative research region in Europe. The Baltic Sea Region could be a perfect frontrunner in the creation of the 5<sup>th</sup> freedom of the internal market – an internal market for knowledge as proposed by the European Council in March.



The use of technology is increasing in the region. The majority of countries in the region have a higher ratio of PCs, Internet users and telephone lines than the rest of Europe. The region thereby has a strong technological infrastructure, which is important in relation to foreign investments and entrepreneurial development and in the end economic growth.

Knowledge based infrastructure is just as important and can complement the limits of physical infrastructure. The region is currently in the lead when it comes to the spread and use of information and communication technologies, but further investments are necessary if this is to continue. This involves education in IT as well. There needs to be a balanced public/private financing of R&D, and the use of EU research programs should be greater in the region.

*Areas of action:*

- Continuation of the development of access to broadband all over the region, including the rural areas, perhaps identifying goals for the entire region
- Cooperation in the development of new communication technologies to overcome some of the constraints imposed by distance, physical barriers and inadequate transport links
- Further development of ICT linkages in rural and peripheral areas
- Possibility of synchronising procedures for R&D funding instruments across the borders

Intercultural dialogue and identity building

In order for the Baltic Sea Region to return to its rightful status as a harmonious and cohesive region, it is essential that culture and civil society are addressed. Regional cooperation and intercultural dialogue is a contributing factor to the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea States, and to a better functioning of democratic institutions and the efficient promotion of human rights, including gender equality issues, the rights of the child and the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Improving the intercultural dialogue is a precondition for an improved social and economic integration, characterised by respect for cultural diversities, improved co-existence and encouraging to an active European citizenship based on openness to the globalised world and on common values.

The intercultural dialogue is an important dimension in areas like that education and lifelong learning, youth cooperation, culture, citizenship, sport, gender equalities, employment, labour market, social inclusion, migration, media policies, democracy, media policies and human rights.

Developing and (re)building the Baltic Sea area's regional identity demands continuous communication and dialogue on all levels between both internal and external partners.

*Areas of action:*

- More cross-border cooperation between schools, academies and other educational institutions
- Increased youth mobility and exchange activities, including use of the European Voluntary Service for young people
- More focus on cultural diversities and intercultural dialogue in cooperation on migration policies and programmes for labour mobility and entrepreneurial cooperation



- Initiatives to promote the Baltic Sea Region to internal and external partners and regions

#### **4. Making the Baltic Sea Region a safer and more secure place**

##### Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

Regional and national cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area is characterised by multilevel and multidimensional participation. A variety of actors in many different fields characterise this cooperation. States, regional institutions, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, CBC structures and private firms interact in different fields like politics, economy, culture and environment etc.

The Northern Dimension offers a special platform for cooperation with the members of the Baltic Sea Region, which are not members of the EU, i.e. Norway, Iceland and Russia. This cooperation is vital to the further development of the Baltic Sea Region. The Northern Dimension activities should complement a Baltic Sea Strategy, in order to provide a common approach of all Baltic Sea actors to mutual objectives and challenges. Further cooperation will therefore lead to greater safety and security in the Baltic Sea Region.

##### *Areas of action:*

- The organisation of a special event for stakeholders of the non-EU Northern Dimension partners to give input to the development of the Baltic Sea Strategy
- Integration of the Baltic Sea Region can be further strengthened by emphasising and utilising the knowledge and experiences from CBC structures to reduce cross border barriers
- Since the regional and local levels are the practical actors in the implementation of most of the measures followed by the Northern Dimension a “regional dimension” inside the Northern Dimension should be created
- The inclusion of a “maritime strand” in the action plan of the Northern Dimension to tackle common problems of the Baltic Sea and to make the Baltic a maritime model region

These are the eight areas of action that we believe are very important in relation to a Baltic Sea Strategy. However, the organisations behind this position paper will also submit their own position papers with more specific viewpoints.



## Governance and implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy

The development of a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is an important initiative and will have substantial influence on the Baltic Sea Region's development. The Strategy will ensure a joint and coordinated approach to the growth of the whole Region and the issue of governance is therefore essential for the success of the Strategy.

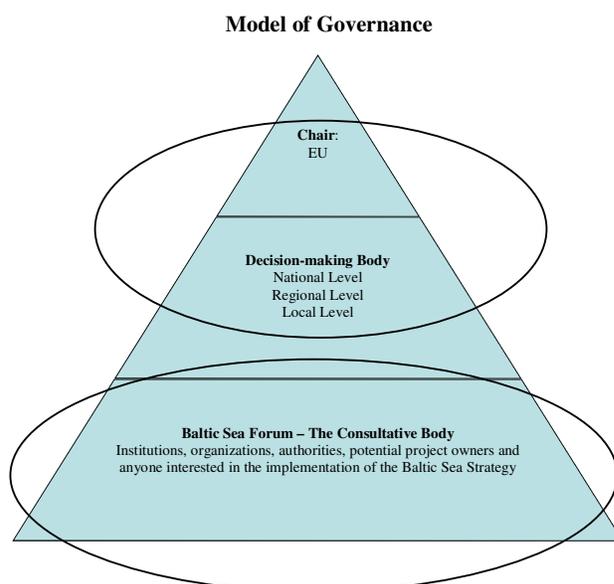
To strengthen the implementation process of the Baltic Sea Strategy the six Baltic Sea organisations therefore suggest a model of governance, which is more than a voluntary forum for exchange of suggestions and national actions plans. This model of governance will include all relevant actors and at the same time keep a clear and transparent decision-making structure.

The local, regional, national and European levels need to play an active part in the implementation of the Strategy, as well as organisations, institutions and private partners. The selection and implementation processes therefore have to be open and inclusive and should involve all relevant actors in order to ensure the anchoring of the Strategy at all levels.

There are advantages and disadvantages of both the top-down and bottom-up processes, which are well-known. The Baltic Sea organisations therefore suggest the creation of a new model of governance, which combines the two processes.

### Model of Governance

This model of governance consists of two main bodies with the European Commission as chair, a decision-making body and a Baltic Sea Forum, the consultative body.



The purpose of this model of governance is to create a strategic instrument for supporting the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and to create a catalyst for the further development of the Region.



### **The Baltic Sea Forum – the Consultative Body**

A number of organizations and networks between local, regional and national authorities, institutions, businesses and other important actors already exist, but in order for the Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region to be a success these actors need to be pulling in the same direction.

As the Commission states, cooperation between the national and the regional or local levels could be improved as well as the cooperation between Member States, between Member States and non-Member States and between stakeholders in the same field. This model of governance will improve this cooperation and ensure a joint commitment.

The Baltic Sea Forum will involve actors from outside the EU, which is essential to ensure that also neighboring actors move within the aims of the Strategy. The Baltic Sea Region cannot be developed without the cooperation with countries and regions, which are outside the EU, as they have just as big an influence on the development of the Region. Involvement of Baltic Sea organisations and the CBSS could solve some of these issues.

The Baltic Sea Forum is necessary to share and coordinate the different views and activities in the region. The Baltic Sea Forum will lead to synergies between ongoing and planned actions and activities in the Region and thereby stimulate stakeholders to hold a steady and joint focus.

The most important task of the Baltic Sea Forum is to discuss the development of the Baltic Sea Region and suggest projects to the Decision-making Body either from themselves or projects proposed by others. In this way a bottom-up process is ensured, everyone is able to suggest projects, and the relevant ideas and suggestions will be implemented.

### **The Decision-making Body**

The Decision-making Body shall be set-up and consist of elected representatives from the different national, regional and local levels in the Baltic Sea Region.

The task of this body is to define and agree on common objectives and activities/projects in the framework of the Baltic Sea Strategy including the mandate of ownership for the specific activity/project. The Decision-making Body will prioritise between proposed projects and monitor the progress of the implementation of the Strategy. This will create the necessary ownership of both the Strategy and the projects and the synergy effect needed to create added value.

### **Chair**

The Baltic Sea organisations suggest that the European Commission chair the Decision-making Body and the Baltic Sea Forum. This ensures the dissemination of the progress and results of the Strategy.

### **Participation of the Baltic Sea Organisations**

BSSSC, B7 Baltic Islands Network, Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Development Forum, Union of the Baltic Cities and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission are willing to play a part in the implementation of the Strategy. The organizations are pan-Baltic and cover a wide part of the Baltic Sea Region both horizontally and vertically and with members from both the EU and outside of EU.



## Proposals for Flagship Projects

The six Baltic Sea organizations, BSSSC, B7 Baltic Sea Islands Network, Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Development Forum, CPMR – Baltic Sea Commission and UBC – Union of the Baltic Cities find that practical and concrete actions are the precondition for implementation of an EU-strategy. We also find that the involvement of relevant actors vertically and horizontally, ensures ownership and regional identity.

Projects should complement the existing strategies of the regions. There are several existing projects that support the Baltic Sea Strategy such as Baltic Master II addressing maritime safety in the Baltic Sea and Transplan addressing sustainable energy strategies and working towards being Co2 neutral.

The following list presents 13 proposals for flagship projects. The projects have been compiled in consensus among the six Baltic Sea organizations mentioned above. They represent areas that have been identified as having the highest impact to facilitate the implementation of the common position paper “A Competitive Region in a Globalized World” supporting the EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

### A. Maritime Safety and Security – Clean Baltic Shipping

The objective of the project is to contribute to the implementation of the action plan of the European Maritime Policy in order to sustain the foundation for life and prosperity.

Local and regional authorities should be included in the responsibility of the implementation, ship owners, port managements, environmental and maritime protection and other stakeholders should be consulted.

The aim is to safeguard a sustainable region and to turn the Baltic Sea into Europe’s maritime best practice region by 2015. The aim is also to serve as a model for maritime safety, leading the way to raise international standards concerning clean shipping and sustainable ports.

### B. Technology transfer

The objective of the project is to facilitate and increase transfer of green technology in order to limit the green house gasses and improve energy effectiveness.

Exchange of experience and knowledge about available technologies will enable the national as well as the regional and local level to improve the environment. The demand for increasing and new technology will form a platform for the private sector, act as a growth driver and expand the market potential inside and outside the region.

An increased use of green technology will enhance the competitiveness of the region and provide better living conditions for the population.

### C. Water Resources – Water Frame Directive

The aim of the project is to improve management of water resources by developing methods for good, effective and transparent river basin based water management, thereby preparing the responsible authorities for the EU Water Frame Directive.



All relevant actors such as the private and academic sectors should be included together with the state, regional and local level.

The project will contribute to reduce the outflow of nutrients and hazardous substances and thereby improve the general health standard in the region and turn it into a model region.

#### **D. Safe and Secure Baltic Sea Region**

The project will implement the Baltic Master Project Action Plan calling for pro-active on-land contingency planning activities, development of coastal zone planning including regional development and spatial planning, and improvement of monitoring ship movements.

Stakeholders from all levels should participate. National, regional and local governments, institutions of higher education, international organisations and private companies.

The purpose is to make the region secure in broad terms of maritime safety, human safety and energy security.

#### **E. An Integrated Transport System**

The objective is to support the integration of Baltic Sea inland road and rail links into a coherent system through joint strategic actions and jointly implemented business concepts. The objective is also to shift the long-haul traffic to rail or sea.

The project requires participation and contributions from the national level, local and regional authorities as well as from private stakeholders.

The project will contribute to a more safe and clean region, thereby increasing the environmental status of the regions.

#### **F. Enhanced Energy Cooperation**

The project should aim at identifying priorities and tools for creating convergence of views and a greater common understanding of existing challenges.

The project will include all relevant actors from national, regional and local levels as well as representatives from the private sector, that are responsible for and have knowledge about development of new technology.

The objective is to create a cleaner region for the population and to increase the business potential of the private sector that can contribute to the competitiveness of the region.

#### **G. Energy Actions for Baltic Competitiveness**

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the region by reinforcing the economic development and growth, without increasing the negative impact on the environment, especially the climate change.

Politicians, management and civil servants will be informed about energy efficiency issues and operating staff in charge of the energy systems in SME/industries and in large public buildings, will be educated.



A concrete result of the project is to educate regional energy tutors with a knowledge and competence in energy efficiency issues equipped with a useful tool – the training in energy efficiency and the software ENSAM– that will help them to further disseminate their knowledge to other local energy guides.

#### **H. LED - Light for Urban and Rural Areas**

The aim is to secure the replacement of public lamps at the municipal level in the Baltic Sea region by lifting the European trade barriers on low-energy lamps and replace kerosene lamps with solar and wind powered light. The use of LED technology has a huge market potential, which will develop together with industrial knowledge and experience.

All authorities responsible for delivery of light must be approached.

Since such a shift in the field of public lighting is the single most efficient way to reduce green house gases globally, the project will have a bearing impact on the environmental condition of the region.

#### **I. Baltic Sea Region Youth Integration and Intercultural Dialogue**

The aim of the project is to promote cultural understanding and to turn the Baltic Sea Region into an area of integration and open dialogue by promoting an active participation in the revision of the EU Youth Policy and the establishment of a Baltic Youth Summit. Furthermore, the project is intended to enhance the level of mobility for young people via the European Voluntary Service.

The project stakeholders should include youth organisations around the Baltic Sea Region e.g. Euroregion Baltic Youth Board, BSSSC Youth Working Group, etc, national, regional and local authorities responsible for youth policies and NGOs.

The long term achievement is a common Baltic identity.

#### **J. Attractiveness, Tourism and Competitiveness**

The objective of the project for Baltic Sea Islands to be “open-all-year” by making them more attractive and accessibility throughout the year, improving the island brand identity of the Baltic Islands and the development of “Congress Islands” and promotion of tourist activities.

The project includes close cooperation and consultation of national, regional and local authorities, cultural and educational institutions, tourism organisations and media partners.

The project will improve the protection of cultural heritage in the whole region.

#### **K. Promotion of SMEs through R&D**

The goal is to increase the region’s competitiveness through interregional cooperation by promoting development of innovative small and medium enterprises, as well as knowledge transfer between research institutions, industry and the economy.

National, regional and local authorities, and economic and research entities in the testing and dissemination of best systematic and organisational models are key players in line with the Triple Helix concept.



The project aims at promoting development of the R&D sector that will result in a more focused approach to business communities and public needs and thereby increase the competitiveness of the region.

### **L. Waste Water Treatment**

The aim of the project is to demonstrate new methods to improve the treatment efficiency of waste water while at the same time saving electrical energy.

Authorities responsible for waste water treatment should be included in the project as well as organizations and institutions and businesses working within the field. New technology will also increase the market potential.

The result is a cleaner region, which again will increase the general health condition of the population.

### **M. Incorporationg the External dimension**

The project aims at studying and debating issues that will surface to the agenda of implementing the Baltic Sea Strategy with representatives from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

The UBC-member cities will through their network be active within such a para-diplomacy.

The aim of the project is to ensure the integration and responsibility of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus into the EU-strategy and thereby further the positive effects of the EU-Strategy.

