



Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation

BSSSC WORK PLAN 2017 - 2019

DATE: Adopted by Board - 29 November 2018

1.0 Introduction

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 — stressing common political ideas with a common regional approach.

Over the past decades, the cooperation between actors in the Baltic Sea Region has been growing rapidly and it got additional momentum in 2009 when the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was adopted and put into action.

On a global scale, the Baltic Sea Region is a small, prosperous macro-region, largely characterised by the small open economies that make up its Nordic and Baltic core. It is home to close to 60 million people. Within the region, political dynamics at the national level as well as the structures for sub-regional collaboration affect the development perspectives.

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.

Peace and democracy are Europe's greatest achievements and should not be taken for granted. All political actors have to take responsibility and to involve and interact with the citizens. Among others, we need to involve young people in the visions and values of the BSR/Europe. BSSSC believes in a permanent dialogue with the young generation of the BSR as they are at the core of social and political change - and the key to any region's future economic success.

The Chairmanship of Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN) 2017 - 2019 will focus on strengthening cooperation and the voice of the BSR sub-regions. ENCN will continue the good work of previous chairmanships and further develop the BSSSC political network - keeping regions involved and active in BSSSC as well as attracting the interest of new regions. Information and communication will be core tools to achieve these goals.

The Chairmanship will also strengthen the dialog and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures in the Baltic Sea area. In addition, actions will be taken to renew the cooperation with Committee of the Regions (CoR) as well as to continue the dialog with European institutions and networks in Brussels.

2.0 BSSSC Strategy 2016-2020

The BSSSC vision is

To facilitate partnerships and strengthen interregional cooperation in support of a more competitive, better accessible and more sustainable Baltic Sea Region – putting local and regional policy makers and the young generation at the heart of its work.

BSSSC's strategic objectives towards 2020

- become a strong and recognised platform to coordinate the voice of the regions in BSR
- be a link between the EUSBSR and regional and local authorities – making use of its Annual Conferences
- be actively engaged in policy discussions and lobby work on topics of particular relevance for the regions
- be a platform for project development, partner search and dissemination of project results
- be a networking arena for exchange of best practices and governance models
- continue to be a platform for young people in the Baltic Sea Region and to strengthen youth participation in all its policy work and beyond.

Important policy areas towards 2020

- Cohesion policy and programmes post 2020 - especially the future of Interreg
- Sustainable development – environment, climate and circular economy
- Transport and accessibility – transport corridors and clean transport
- Culture and identity
- Growth, jobs and innovation - including creative sectors
- Youth, education and employability

3.0 Work Plan 2017 - 2019 under the Norwegian Chairmanship

3.1 Cross cutting themes

- The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and involvement of local and regional authorities and young people in the implementation

The EUSBSR constitute an important basic for the actions of the BSSSC and its regions, and BSSSC has since the very beginning participated as a key stakeholder in the planning and implementation of the strategy. The BSSSC strives to advocate the interests of the regions and promotes its implementation and ownership on all levels of governance.

BSSSC will:

- Promote the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance in the implementation of the EUSBSR and voice the need to actively cooperate with neighbouring countries
- Follow and give input to the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan in 2019
- Keep close contact with the National Coordination Group of the EUSBSR and relevant Policy Area and Horizontal Action Coordinators
- Take actions and contribute to the programmes of the Annual Forums of the EUSBSR in Berlin 2017 and Tallinn 2018
- Be partner in the 10th Annual Forum in Gdansk, Poland in June 2019
- Connect the BSSSC annual conferences to the work of the strategy - offering a platform for local and regional actors to interact with the EUSBSR structures
- Cooperate with Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and EuroRegion Baltic (ERB) as well as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) with regard to youth participation and involvement in the EUSBSR
- Take active part in the "Let's Communicate project" (Interreg BSR programme) via ENCN and Pomeranian Region (project partners) – as associated partner

Responsible rapporteurs: BSSSC Chairmanship and Pomeranian Region, PL

➤ Cohesion Policy 2021 - 2027

The prominent role of cohesion policy for the regions around the BSR require a constant focus from the side of BSSSC. The work with regard to Cohesion Policy and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) beyond 2020 is ongoing. BSSSC has fed into the process and responded to European Commission's proposals. BSSSC will continue to monitor the development, follow up its policy papers and keep its network of regions informed. Cohesion policy is an effective investment policy that contributes strongly to growth and jobs in Europe and BSR, and the policy has benefitted the citizens of all EU Member States and supported them during difficult economic times

BSSSC will:

- Continue to promote the interests of the BSR sub-regions towards the European Commission, the European Parliament, national authorities and others with regard to Cohesion Policy beyond 2020
- Follow the process constantly and monitor the development
- Advocate its policy papers with political requirements given as input to the process and – if needed - develop additional position papers.

- Emphasise the need for territorial cooperation - among others in view of the EUSBSR - and strive for more financial resources to Interreg post 2020
- Promote the cooperation with neighbouring countries and a smooth system for project development and implementation
- Continue to lobby for radical simplification for better delivery of results from Cohesion Policy.
- Give input to and take part in the development of a next generation Interreg BSR programme 2021 – 2027 as a stakeholder organisation

Responsible rapporteur: Land Brandenburg, Germany in cooperation with the ad hoc Working Group on Cohesion Policy

➤ Youth involvement/youth empowerment

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. The BSSSC will focus on a continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation.

BSSSC will:

- Strengthen the work of the youth network/working group youth policy (WGYP) and better integrate the youth voice in all BSSSC policy areas. Support the youth in their will to comment on and contribute to the European as well as BSSSC policy
- Continue to advocate for a fixed role for the youth voice in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region after 2020
- Prepare and execute the Baltic Sea Youth Camp in June 2019 – alongside the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2019. Cooperate closely with the BSSSC partners on youth cooperation (UBC, ERB, CBSS and others) as well as PA Culture
- Continue to organise a youth event along the BSSSC annual conferences as well as a yearly spring meeting
- Formulate political requirements towards decision-making bodies at the national and European level on youth policy – continue the work on the “Baltic Sea Youth Declaration” together ERB and UBC.
- Continue the close cooperation with CBSS, UBC, ERB and other relevant organisations and actors.
- Develop a cooperation with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on youth policy and youth involvement
- Take part in the ERB youth governance project (CaSYPoT) funded by Interreg South Baltic Programme - as an associated partner.
- Take part in the Baltic Youth 2030 for a sustainable Baltic Sea Region arranged by the CBSS.

Responsible rapporteur: To be decided!

➤ Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with Russia

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.

BSSSC will:

- Participate in the ND Steering Group meetings as observer
- Keep up and develop the contact to ND partners and to the relevant partnerships
- Continue the dialog and cooperation with Kaliningrad Region - and encourage other Russian regions to join the work of BSSSC

Responsible rapporteur: BSSSC Chairmanship and Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, FI

3.2 BSSSC Policy Areas 2017 - 2019

➤ Sustainable development and climate change - Baltic 2030

There is a need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages - to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The BSR is highly vulnerable to climate change and the capacities of all stakeholders must be used to design effective policies on mitigation and adaptation through a bottom-up and multi-sector approach.

BSSSC will:

- Cooperate with the Baltic 2030 unit in CBSS and take part in the Expert Group on Sustainable Development (EGSD). Contribute to the implementation of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan – adopted by the CBSS in June 2017.
- Connect the work to actions of the Horizontal Action Climate in the EUSBSR - to follow up the local and regional actions with regard to Paris agreement.
- Promote the SDGs in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2019 in Gdansk – where focus will be on circular and sharing economy

- Produce a best practises booklet with regard to circular economy in the BSR – as input to the Annual Forum 2019 and as contribution to the implementation of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan. Cooperate closely with the hosts of EUSBSR AF 2019 and Baltic 2030 unit in the CBSS.
- Support the ReGeneration 2030 process

Responsible rapporteur: BSSSC Chairmanship

➤ Transport and accessibility – transport corridors

BSSSC will:

- Cooperate with the WG Transport in the Baltic Sea Commission to join forces
- Follow the work and contribute to the Interreg BSR transport corridor projects Scandria2Act, TENTacle and NSB CoRe.
- Follow the work of the transport platform BSR Access as an associated partner
- Link up with EUSBSR Policy Area Transport and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Transport and Logistics.
- Follow the work in the relevant TEN-T (Trans European Network - Transport) core corridors and take actions when relevant (policy paper and lobby work). Keep the regions updated.
- Support the project Interreg BSR project MAMBA (“MAximised MoBility and Accessibility of Services in Regions Affected by Demographic Change”) as an associated partner

Responsible rapporteurs: Vest-Agder County and Akershus County, Norway

➤ Culture, creative industries and regional identity

The Baltic Sea Region has an outstandingly diverse and attractive cultural life and a valuable cultural heritage. The EUSBSR focuses on strengthening and integrating BSR policy co-operation, with a view to develop synergies and to join forces. The Policy Area Culture in the EUSBSR focuses on intensifying the dialogue and cooperation between the main BSR cultural players in order to strengthen intercultural networking, to improve the ecosystem for cultural and creative industries in the BSR and to strengthen regional identity. The positive impacts of culture and creativity on economy, employment, regional development, social integration and cohesion are proven. Culture builds bridges across borders and across social and political differences. The force of culture as a catalyst for social and technological innovations has to be better used and promoted.

BSSSC will:

- Follow up the BSSSC policy paper on Culture – adopted in May 2018
- Advocate for better possibilities for the funding of cultural projects in the upcoming EU funding period 2021 – 2027

- Cooperate closely with and take part in the work of EUSBSR Policy Area Culture.
- Continue dialog with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture.
- Support the Interreg BSR projects as an associated partner
 - BalticRIM („Baltic Sea Region Integrated Maritime Cultural Heritage Management“)
 - Creative Ports
 - UrbCulturalPlanning
- Cooperate with the UBC Cultural Cities Commission, Ars Baltica and other relevant organisations and networks to join forces and look for synergies

Responsible rapporteur: Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

➤ Maritime Policy and HELCOM

The Blue Economy has a significant importance for the whole Baltic Sea Area. 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.

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 will promote the implementation of the BSAP especially on the sub-regional level. Clear water, safe maritime traffic and healthy wildlife have concrete effects on the sub-regions.

BSSSC will:

- Continue its role as observer in HELCOM and contribute to implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EUSBSR “Save the Sea”
- Advocate for funding to the Blue Economy post 2020 as well as for the continuation of the maritime cross-border INTERREG programmes - towards EU institutions and national authorities.
- Carry out the BSSSC Annual Conference 2019 with a focus on Maritime Economy together with the host region Klaipeda and other actors
- Support the work of the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy of CBSS and take part in the meetings
- Continue the cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group.

Responsible rapporteur: Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Finland

➤ Smart specialisation and Bio-economy

The concept of smart specialisation has proven to be successful in fostering innovation by strengthening the competitive advantages and development potentials of regions.

Bio-economy offers great opportunities for accelerating growth and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. The crosscutting nature of bio-economy calls for new ways of working and cooperating, as well as new processes, services and products that can contribute to a greener future.

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 will:

- Cooperate with the relevant Policy Area Coordinators in the EUSBSR.
- Take part in the Advisory Board of the RDI2Club project
- Formulate political requirements of the regions towards decision-making bodies on the topics concerned
- Provide meeting places and be a platform for stakeholder engagement and share of good practises and disseminate best practise examples from projects and governance models.
- Follow the work and be an associated partner in the Interreg BSR projects
 - RDI2Club (Rural RDI milieus in transition towards smart Bio-economy Clusters and innovation ecosystems).
 - Smart-Up BSR (Improving smart specialisation implementation of the Baltic Sea Region through orchestrating innovation hubs)

Responsible rapporteur: Häme Region, FI with support from BSSSC Chairmanship

4.0 Rapporteur-ships to programmes and organisations

- Interreg BSR programme - Matti Lipsanen, *Häme Region, Finland*
- Baltic Sea Commission/CPMR - *Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Finland*
- CoR Intergroup Baltic Sea - *Jan Edøy (Brussels Antenna)*
- UBC - *Toivo Riimaa, Estonia*

5.0 Implementation structure 2017 - 2019

- The Chairman and the Secretariat (Eastern Norway County Network)
- The Board
- The Youth Network/WG Youth Policy
- Rapporteurs for policy areas - and in some cases ad hoc working groups

- Cooperation with BSR organisations and programmes
- Brussels Antenna