BSSSC Youth Spring Meeting 2018

18th-20th April, Hämeenlinna, Tavastia (Häme) region, Finland

Youth Declaration

To the reader,

This declaration was written in line with the wishes of the youth that were expressed during our BSSSC Youth meeting in Finland in April 2018.

Present at the meeting were youth from all over the Baltic Sea region, notably Norway, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Russia and Finland. The different regions from these countries were Tavastia, Schleswig-Holstein, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, West Pomerania, Buskerud, Telemark, Tallinn and Saint Petersburg.

We look back with great pride and emotion to the days in Finland, as the amount of great ideas and strong opinions expressed during those days were above any of our expectations.

Not to mention the extensive amount of pronunciation of Finnish street signs.

We wish all of the participants the best of luck for the future, and hope that whoever decides to read this wishes to act upon the challenges and solutions the youth themselves expressed.

From your kaverit,

Timo and Martin
Youth members of the BSSSC board

In this document you will find:

1. Challenges, positive things and solutions related to the smart future
2. Challenges and solutions for creating green cities
3. Challenges and ideas regarding silver and youth
4. Challenges and ideas regarding the digitalization of the Baltic region
5. Challenges and ideas regarding an active youth involvement
6. Feedback from the youth and suggestions for future youth events

On the issue of a Smart Future

Closely connected to the other issue of green cities, the smart future presents itself with several technological and ethical challenges, as well as fantastic opportunities for enhancing life in the Baltic Sea region. To better tackle the issue, the youth attempted to identify **key challenges**, which were as follows:

- Less jobs in, for example, traditional energy sectors or transportation
- Ethical codes for autonomous vehicles
- Increased susceptibility to hackers
- Less self-sufficiency as the need for specialization increases
- Harder to protect personal data from transnational companies

However, we also found the bright side of a smart future, looking into some **positive things** which this future might bring:

- Even more connected to the outside world
- More communication = more exchanging of knowledge = easier to create solutions
- AI and technology increase efficiency and thereby drive prices down
- May give human workers better working conditions
- Easier to become an entrepreneur, also for youth

Our **message** to politicians reading this became the following solutions and pleas:

- Strongly protect the personal data of the population by law
- Include youth throughout complete political processes to save money and create better solutions
- Promote cultural and educational exchange through more exchange years in school
- Great care concerning implementation of AI, regardless of its use
- Strive for furthering of already existing green cities, for example Co2-free airplanes
- Attempt to further implement a circular economy
- Integrate the smart future on all levels: government, education, private sector etc.
- Listen to youth when they wish to say something

On the issue of Green Cities

The youth identified several problems when it comes to the current state of Baltic cities, in regard to actually becoming green cities. We trust that some of these already you're your attention, but we wish to emphasize them once more. Amongst **the problems** that the youth identified were:

- Overconsumption
- Not enough recycling (carelessness)
- Absence of bicycle paths
- Traffic jams and too much traffic in general
- Pollution of the sea shores
- Polluting factories too close to the cities

Attempting to tackle these issues and discussing together led to a variety of **options for solving one or several of these issues**, such as:

- Easy and available recycling options in public spaces
- A common bottle deposit system for the Baltic Sea region
- Public stations for clean water and filling of water bottles
- Widespread use of solar or clean energy in general
- As many bicycle paths as there are roads, or more
- Urban gardens, for example on top or on the side of buildings
- Always striving to make the greener choice the cheaper one
- Free public transportation (if test runs show positive results on car travel)
- Street lights with motion sensors for energy saving
- Public book places (for swapping books for free)
- Investing in and supporting local producers to reduce pollution trough transport
- Spreading awareness on climate issues among children and youth

In addition to this, the youth clearly stated that green cities are only achievable through cooperation between the local government, the private sector (that invents the solutions!) and civil society. Only through the joint effort of all people are green cities possible.

On the issue regarding the exchange between silver and youth

Different age groups often have different ideas about the future of society. We think that it is important to have a positive dialogue between old and young. Some of the **challenges** that we identified where:
- Lack of communication
- Use of different methods of communication
- Prejudices about the other age groups
- Different values
- Power indifferences are enormous
- Use of different languauge

To solve these challenges the youth had brought variety of **ideas**:
- An App should be established to empower the youth to communicate with governments
- Communication should be put in place by creating shared committees with silver and youth together
- The constructive dialogue between the young and old generation should be increased by establishing new methods for a constructive dialogue

On the issue of digitalization of the Baltic region

Digitalization will be one of the biggest revolutions in the history human beings. Therefore, we identified some future **challenges** that are most relevant for us as youth.
- What is on the internet once will stay there for ever
- Algorithms are not driven by values
- Technical development should serve the people on not the other way around
- Power gets concentrated at viewer people
- Not everyone is empowered to take part in the process of digitalization

To solve these challenges the youth had brought variety of **ideas**:
- Constitutions should be strengthened to compete with smart algorithms
- A charter of values for algorithms should be established
- The competition laws should be strengthened by giving the Commissioner for competition more rights, allowing him/her to split up companies that get to powerful through their Data
- Free courses should empower everyone to take part in the digitalization process

The youth also sees **positive** effect through digitalization:
- Digitalization can help us to establish a smart power grid with CO_2 Neutral energy
- digital tools can make our education system better
- Communication and participation can be made easier due to better accessibility of tools through the internet

On the issue of active youth involvement

Youth involvement can help to get revolutionary ideas and good feedback to shape the future in a better way. It also helps to save costs in the future and to have active and experienced politicians in the future. Therefore, the youth identified these **Challenges**:

- Involvement is often connected to expenses
- It's hard to get the youth engaged
- Often there is no real power given to the youth
- Not everyone feels empowered to take part

To face the challenges we have the following **recommendations**:

- youth councils should be mandatory around the Baltic Sea
- youth councils should have the right to propose directly to their local and regional government in committees
- engagement in youth councils should be promoted in all areas of community's
- the involvement should start as early as possible -
- all costs should be covered by the governments

Feedback from the youth on this event

The youth expressed their happiness with several aspects of the meeting, including, but not limited to:

- The food was great (Implying: Food in Häme is great ;))
- Good to be in the same group on one topic, not mixing groups halfway
- Not too large groups, else the discussion can become a mess
- Good questions, for example: "How have you been able to make an impact?"
- Great with concrete examples that gave good ideas on what to do
- Nice amount of time for socializing

As with many things, there is always room for improvement. In the wake of this spring youth meeting, the youth expressed many ideas for the future. The larger ones are marked in **bold**.

- SDG workshop was the same as Trebnitz last year, rather have different themes
- More time for discussing such an amount of topics
- **Several days**, one whole is not sufficient for good cooperation and great results
- Clear methods for all workshops
- Provide more information on the topics beforehand
- **Automatic application for ERASMUS funding** every year for youth meeting to secure the same quality and structure regardless of host region
- **Proposed topics for the next meeting:**
    o SDG: Equality (Gender, LGBTQ)
    o Youth participation and democracy
    o SDG: City planning (sustainable cities etc.)
    o SDG: Life below water
- A gathering place at the hotel to spend time together and get to know each other
- Focus on how to make workshops results presentable/interesting, ex. public speaking
- **Letting youth meetings overlap with board meetings**
    o Combined workshops together with the board members
    o Brainstorm on our own first, then meet with politicians, civil servants etc.
    o Would get more out of it than *just* brainstorming
    o Let us discuss our brainstorming with politicians and scientists/researchers
    o Not just discuss problems and solutions on our own
- Extensive discussion about a few instead of a shallow discussion on all
    o Deeper problems and solutions: city planning etc.
    o Not just small things and amenities, but LARGE discussions