



ANNUAL REPORT
2005 - 2006



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Introductory by the Chairman

Mr Uno Aldegren, Chairman of the BSSSC, 2004-2006



Dear Colleagues,

There are quite a few examples of accomplishments when it comes to our work in the Baltic Sea Region. Obviously, the work of BSSSC is mainly done by the ad hoc work groups, and the fact that Baltic Sea Organisations, at a common meeting in Karlskrona decided upon closer cooperation of work groups is a guarantee for future development of the region. But let me stay within the BSSSC. The work group on transport and infrastructure has presented its Survey on the infrastructure planning in the Baltic Sea Region. Ms Annika Annerby Jansson, who lead the group, also presented its profound work and results at the annual conference in Kiel on 22 September. Transport infrastructure is an important field for the development of the Baltic Sea Region, as the focus of the annual conference indicates. We can look forward to interesting and exciting discussions about future actions to keep the BSSSC a leading operator in this crucial field.

The BSSSC Ad hoc work group on Cohesion Policy worked out a position on the reform of the EU Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, that was agreed on by the Board at the Annual Conference in Szczecin 2005 and later also adopted by CPMR/BSR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions/Baltic Sea Region), B7 (Baltic Islands Network) and UBC (Union of the Baltic Cities) as a common view on the EU cohesion policy 2007 to 2013. As a follow up on the policy paper, the work group compiled a brochure of good examples of ongoing and finalised Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B projects. The brochure demonstrates a clear link to the objectives of creating new jobs and growth, as stated in the Lisbon objectives.

The work group of Northern Dimension, whose efforts to implement the concept of a Northern Dimension, and including EU, Norway, Iceland and the Russian Federation in cooperation, is showing results.

The main activity during 2006 of the work group on Sustainable Regional Development and Baltic 21 has been to prepare the recurrent Baltic Sea Day in St Petersburg, that took place in March. The group has also continued the Baltic 21 Lighthouse Project A.S.A.P. Its purpose of launching such projects was to implement Baltic 21 at the level of subregions. As was the case at the annual conference in Szczecin, a youth voice was heard in the plenary session at the annual conference in Kiel, and youth representatives were elected to the Board to ensure a youth perspective on the work done by the BSSSC. The Board's decision to engage BSSSC in the development of a European Maritime Policy has led to further moves and activities in close cooperation with Schleswig-Holstein initiative "Sea Our Future". A rapporteur on maritime affairs Mr. Günther Shulz, Head of Hansa Office in Brussels, was appointed by the Board, and a first practical step was the seminar on maritime activities of BSSSC members, organized in Hamburg in the beginning of 2005. After that, a draft for a BSSSC position on European maritime policies was formulated, debated and sent to Commissioner Joe Borg in August 2005. A meeting with the DG Fishery and Maritime Affairs followed, which led to BSSSC, and the government of Schleswig-Holstein's hosting of The European Maritime Policy Conference of the Baltic Sea Area in Kiel. The BSSSC feels proud of having taken a prominent part of the consultation process.

To conclude, much work is well initiated, well accomplished and many goals are to be achieved. This future work will be led by County Council Chairman Arne Øren from Eastern Norway County Network in Norway, who will be the Chairman 2006-2008.


MR UNO ALDEGREN, REGION SKÅNE, SWEDEN



XIII Annual Conference in Szczecin, Poland

The XIIIth Annual BSSSC Conference on the theme “Growth, Innovation, Competitiveness- Key Challenges for the Baltic Sea Region, Cohesion Policy and the Lisbon Strategy as tools for the Baltic Sea Region” was hosted by the Marshal’s Office of the Westpomeranian Region in Szczecin 20-22 October 2005.

The speakers addressed different aspects of the theme in the plenary sessions and debates. Commissioner Ms Danuta Hubner in her pre-recorded speech emphasised the fact that there is no contradiction between cohesion and competitiveness, that they are two sides of the same coin. She also gave her vote of confidence to the regions in the Baltic Sea Region, that consist of old and new member states and have strong common interests, will come to valuable insights into how growth, innovation and competitiveness can best be promoted in our part of the world.

The Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, Mr. Gerhard Stahl underlined the fact that the Lisbon objectives will not become real if there is no true ownership and involvement of the local and regional levels. He presented good reasons to why regions should be involved in the strategic planning, implementation and monitoring of the Lisbon agenda. Mr. Stahl also informed the auditorium about the role and initiatives of the Committee of the Regions when it comes to local and regional involvement in the Lisbon governance process.

Ambassador Christer Persson from Council of the Baltic Sea States, with the support from the “State of the Region Report” created by the Baltic Development Forum and presented just days before, accentuated specific areas in which the actors around the Baltic Sea should cooperate to obtain maximum effects. Among others areas, cluster development, research and development and full integration of Russia into the region were mentioned. Ambassador Persson also stressed the importance of a balanced development and growth in Europe, which require sustainable co-operation in interconnected transnational areas. The importance of this development should be reflected in the allocation of funds to the transnational strand.

The youth representatives that met during the conference were given the possibility of presenting their view on reaching the Lisbon criteria and their opinion about the European Youth Pact in the plenary session. They also contributed to the BSSSC Conference Resolution.

Cohesion Policy

The BSSSC Ad hoc work group on a Cohesion Policy produced a position on the reform of the EU Cohesion Policy 2007-2013. The position paper was agreed on by the Board at the Annual Conference in Szczecin 2005. Later on, it was adopted by CPMR/BSR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions/Baltic Sea Region), B7 (Baltic Islands Network) and UBC (Union of the Baltic Cities) as a common view on the EU cohesion policy 2007 to 2013. The position paper was sent to the EU Commission, the Baltic Sea Region Joint Programming Committee and other organisations.

As a follow up on the policy - and as input for the Interreg programming process - the BSSSC carried out a study in early 2006 of good examples of the Baltic region's commitment in supporting the EU Lisbon objectives. Examples of good present and finalised Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B projects that demonstrate a clear link to the objectives of creating new jobs and growth, as stated in the Lisbon objectives, were collected in a brochure.

The brochure demonstrates to the EU Commission, the EU Parliament, the EU Council and the member states, that the regions ought to play a key role in the implementation of structural funds programmes and projects in the new cohesion period in order to ensure the creation of new jobs and growth.

It was useful in the BSSSC led work shop on "How the Lisbon and Gothenburg Objectives are reflected in the Present BSR Interreg III B Programme" at the Baltic Sea INTERREG III B project conference - Setting Regions in Motion - in May 2006 in Malmö, Skåne Region.

The task of the Ad hoc work group on a Cohesion Policy has been fulfilled and is now closed down.





Transport and Infrastructure

The work group has, after the Annual Conference in Malmö, followed the directives given by the BSSSC Board in January 2005:

Phase one would be to make a survey,(...) the purpose of which is to identify common ground as well as points of conflict. On basis of the survey the work group and the Board should analyze the possibilities, priorities and best strategies for joint action in the Baltic Sea area.

Based on the work in the first stage the work group made the following conclusions:

Investment plans and priorities

- The existing investment plans show that northwest Europe and central Europe will be well connected. The connections between the regions and states in the eastern and southern part of the Baltic Sea Region, however, needs to be given higher priority.
- The connections between Scandinavia and the St. Petersburg region need to be given higher priority.
- The Nordic Countries will be well connected when the current investment plans have been completed.
- The new member states have low budgets for infrastructure investments. This shows the need for additional external funding from among others EU and the World Bank.

- When the national infrastructure plans have been implemented there will still be missing links and connections in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Strong attention should be paid to the connections between ports and their hinterlands with special attention to the possibilities to strengthen intermodal transports.
- There is a need to develop the methods for financing infrastructure investments. Public funding, fees and private public partnerships are interesting possibilities complementing each other. International cooperation is important in such a development.

Gaps in current cooperation

- Air transports are important for the Baltic Sea Region but have a low representation in the cooperation projects. More attention should be paid to air transport.
- The cooperation projects are focusing on corridors. It would be a positive development if more projects could put more emphasis on interconnecting the metropolitan regions.
- There is a big potential for development in the field of logistics to make transports more effective and sustainable. New technology provides new opportunities.

Further cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

- The numerous organisations working to strengthen the transport infrastructure are a significant evidence of the need for a more efficient infrastructure.
- The conclusions show that extended cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region is needed and the regions are important stakeholders, since there is a need in bridging over barriers in the national plans.
- There is a need to build up common knowledge and a need for dialogue as a base for priorities in the field of infrastructure development. BSSSC has an important role as an umbrella organisation and should take initiatives in cooperation with other pan-Baltic organisations.

The Board decided that the work group should continue with a phase 2 aiming to provide a base for a common transport strategy in the BSR. A possible continuation could be to initiate a macro Interreg project in the coming programme period.

The Board of the BSSSC has given its support to making the strategy a Project within the new transnational programme for the Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013 with Region Skåne as Lead partner.

More info about the strategy can be downloaded from www.bsssc.com





Northern Dimension

The mandate of the current 4th ad-hoc work group on a Northern Dimension (ND) was prolonged by decision of the BSSSC Board meeting on 29 January 2005. According to this mandate, the work group followed the political development of both Northern Dimension (ND) and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and continuously reported to the Board meetings.

From late 2005 on, it became quite clear that the future "Northern Dimension from 2007" is submitted to EU-Russia strategic partnership and that the two documents to be signed during the Finnish EU Presidency (political declaration, policy frame document) are negotiated directly between the European Commission and the Russian Government. As a result, almost all Baltic Sea organisations became far from influencing this process.

Against this background no work group meetings were held in 2006. Instead unsystematic information on development of ND and ENPI was communicated by electronic means. Until the expiry of the work group mandate (end 2006) it does not seem likely that the work group could become active again considering the political circumstances. However, the work group will continue to follow the process where possible.

Based on decisions to be taken at a European-Russian level by the end of 2006 (new ND policy declaration, ND policy framework document) the Board will need to decide whether a new (5th) ad-hoc work group ND shall be established. If required, the work group ND will be ready to develop a proposal for further decision at the first Board meeting in 2007.

Sustainable Regional Development and Baltic 21

The main activity of the Ad hoc work group on Sustainable Regional Development and Baltic 21 in 2006 has been the preparation for the Baltic Sea Day arrangement in St. Petersburg in March 2006. In addition the Ad Hoc work group has been following up the Baltic 21 Lighthouse Project A.S.A.P. (*Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition*).

For the seventh time St. Petersburg hosted the International Environmental Forum “Baltic Sea Day” on 22 – 23 March 2006. The Forum gathered 425 participants from most of the countries around the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea Day was established by HELCOM in 1996.

Round table discussions during the meeting covered various items like Water Quality, Environment and Tourism, The North-European Gas Pipeline construction in the Baltic Sea, Sustainable agriculture and Rural Development, and Marine protection. BSSSC was invited to chair a round table discussion on “*Consolidation of cooperation of Baltic Sea sub-regional organisations*”.

The round table was chaired by BSSSC Board member Mr. Arne Øren and General Secretary of HELCOM Ms. Anne Kristin Brusendorff. Twelve different organisations from the European and Baltic Sea level were represented.

In the resolution, the round table agreed on efforts to strengthen the voice of the wide range of organisations at the sub-regional level in the Baltic Sea Region in order to make better use of the limited resources and to gain synergy of the work done in the various organisations.

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to implement the concept of the Ecosystem Approach in the Baltic Sea Region was agreed on as a common base for further cooperation. The round table recommended the organisers to include the Baltic Sea Action Plan as a main topic at the Baltic Sea Day in March 2007.





Youth Policy

The year 2005/2006 was a period of strengthening the cooperation of regions in the field of youth policy and increasing participation of youth in decisions and actions of the BSSSC.

At the Annual BSSSC Conference in Szczecin, a meeting for youth took place. A discussion about the European Youth Pact and work on establishing an interregional cooperation network was on the agenda. 42 young people from ten regions around the Baltic Sea participated. For the first time, two young representatives were selected and appointed to the BSSSC Board as observers. It was decided that they can attend all Board meetings with full rights to speak. Since then, the youth representatives have attended the BSSSC Board meetings and have given reports to the youth network.

In addition, the youth's opinion about the European Youth Pact was presented during plenary debates on the last day of the conference. The Youth Policy was also incorporated into the BSSSC Conference Resolution.

Another achievement during the year was the establishment of the network of regional youth representatives. There are already representatives from single regions, and a proposition referring to the range of their activity was elaborated. The most important result of the meeting was the contacts made between young people from eight countries of the Baltic Sea region.

The next meeting of the work group and youth network members was held in Tallinn, the 9 - 10 March 2006. During this meeting cooperation and the integration of activities undertaken by different actors in the Baltic Sea region were discussed. As a result of the discussions, the document "Integrated Youth policy in the Baltic Sea Region for better living conditions of the young people in BSR" was adopted and presented at the Board in May 2006. In this paper, the work group expressed its strong concern about taking the impact of youth as a central factor in future society into consideration when making decisions in all fields of politics. It also expresses the strong opinion of the necessity of integrating the work of organisations, the experience of people and the variety of methods and strategies being used in youth work. Groups of objectives were developed under the following headlines: Solidarity and cooperation, Democracy and participation, Mobility, and Full growth of a young person. Plans to implement these are now being worked out. An example is the event in Tallin in October 2006, "Youth in the city".

During this year, many youth events took place. In November 2005, a training course on Youth & Democracy was carried out in Storstrom County, leading to improved competencies and increased activities in the region. Another example is YCAB 2006 - Youth Culture Across Borders - a large scale project with young people from five BSR countries.

Maritime Affaires

Building on the BSSSC activities on maritime affairs of the year 2005 (seminar on maritime local and regional activities in Hamburg, discussion meeting with other Baltic Sea regional organisations and adopting a basic BSSSC position on the EU Maritime Policy), BSSSC activities have been focused on the Baltic Sea regional response to the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy. To start with, activities have been concentrated on the EU Commission, DG Fishery and Maritime Affairs, to convince Commissioner Borg and the Task Force to accept BSSSC together with its partner Schleswig-Holstein as the leading actors to organise the Baltic Sea regional assessment of the Green Paper. Commissioner Borg welcomed this offer. It was agreed that the BSSSC Annual Conference in September 2006 was combined with a special conference on EU Maritime Policy for regional partners and organisations from the Baltic Sea area. This conference was jointly arranged by BSSSC and Schleswig-Holstein, hosted by the Minister for European Affairs and organised by the European Department of the Government of Schleswig-Holstein.

This conference “European Maritime Policy – Baltic Sea Area’s Opinion on the EU Green Paper” took place at the premises of the Landtag of Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel 22 September 2006. Over one hundred and fifty leading representatives and experts from the regional level of the Baltic Sea area discussed together with Commissioner Borg, the Finish EU presidency and other governmental experts the outlines of an EU maritime policy as well as the content of the first EU document about such a policy, the Green Paper “Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European Vision for the Oceans and Seas”. In the careful worded conclusion the Conference supported this new

approach of the EU Commission, outlined a “10 Point Roadmap” for a common European Maritime Policy and asked the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) to develop the Baltic Sea Region into Europe’s Maritime “model region”.

The 10- Point Roadmap includes items as:

- Broaden the marine knowledge base
- Improve competitiveness and employment perspectives in the maritime sector
- Strengthen the maritime environment
- Improve maritime safety
- Invest in the maritime transport-infrastructure
- Develop instruments for an integrated maritime policy
- Create European financial instruments to support maritime engagement of the regional level
- Make use of strategic partnerships
- Demonstrate ‘best practice’ by governments
- Continue with a White Paper on EU Maritime Policy

This ‘strategic partnership’ between BSSSC and the Government of Schleswig-Holstein underlined the continuous engagement of the Baltic Sea regional level in maritime affairs, which started with the Kiel and Trelleborg Conference 2004 and the establishment of the project “Baltic Master”. It created a direct link between the special concerns of the Baltic Sea Area and the development of an EU policy. Furthermore, it proved to be a successful model of how the Baltic Sea regional network BSSSC can promote the interests of the region. For more information about the conference, www.bssc.com



Photo: Photodisk



Activities Brussels Antenna 2006

Sofie Gardstedt at the office of South Sweden, www.sydsam.se, has been acting as Antenna for the BSSSC in Brussels until the shift of chairmanship in 2006.

Contacts and cooperation with officers at the EU-institutions and at regional representations established in 2005 have been further explored and deepened. The Antenna has communicated results from the BSSSC work groups to selected recipients and has continued to share the general information with the many recipients in the database established for the purpose of raising awareness of the BSSSC in Brussels and Europe.

The second role of the Antenna has been to support individual BSSSC-members to accomplish their various tasks in Brussels, such as arranging meetings and finding specific information.

Two particular tasks have been to develop a close cooperation with the EU-officers responsible for developing the Maritime Policy of the EU, and to prepare the Baltic Sea Region Perspectives conference in Brussels on 9 November 2006 together with colleagues from other regional associations.

Cooperation with other BSR Organisations and Initiatives

A meeting of BSR Organisations took place in Karlskrona on 31 May, it was headed by CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and took place back-to-back with the Annual Conference of CPMR. The representatives decided upon closer co-operation between work groups especially important to the development of the Baltic Sea Region. Cooperation in the fields of Transport Infrastructure and Maritime Policy was addressed. Regarding Transport Infrastructure, the regions are anxious to become a bridge between local, national and European levels in the development process. As the regions around the Baltic Sea are partly responsible for the planning and improvements of the transport system, it is logical and crucial for the Baltic Sea Organisations to cooperate to obtain maximum results.

Representatives of the Baltic Europa Inter Group of the European Parliament, CBSS, BDF, Baltic Metropolises and BSSSC cooperated in the preparation of the common conference "Baltic Sea Region Perspectives-Innovation, mobility, integration" in Brussels on 9 November 2006. The purpose of the conference is to give a common picture of the diversity of the Baltic Sea Region, its potential and needs.

The maritime safety project Baltic Master progresses and is achieving results. A success factor for the project is to communicate the results to decision makers. BSSSC is one important political platform for dissemination of achieved results. Baltic Master had a meeting for the Political Committee about the Green Paper on a future maritime policy in Europe back-to-back with the annual conference of BSSSC in Kiel.¹

The Secretariats of CBSS and BSSSC met in January in Malmö. The organisations are in close cooperation and as a result of the meeting a representative from the CBSS Secretariat took part in the Board meeting of BSSSC in Stockholm.

¹ For more information please contact the project manager Daniel Sköld, daniel.skold@regionblekinge.se.



Photo: BSSSC



Photo: BSSSC



Photo: BSSSC

The BSSSC Chairmanship and Secretariat 2006-2008

At the conference in Kiel, Mr Arne Øren entered the Chair of the BSSSC, starting now and holding it until 2008. Mr Øren is the Chairman of the Regional Cooperation Board of Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN), which is a voluntary political cooperation of the eight counties in the south east part of Norway. This includes Akershus, Buskerud, Hedmark, Oppland, Oslo, Telemark, Vestfold and Østfold counties. Mr Øren has been a politician for more than 25 years and a member of the Board of the BSSSC since it started in 1993.

Eastern Norway County Network has been active in Baltic Sea Region cooperation since the end of 1990-ties and they have substantial commitments in the BSR region. The eight counties have partner regions and cooperation partners in the Nordic Countries

as well as in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. All eight counties through ENCN have a partnership agreement with Land Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. In 2002 ENCN hosted the BSSSC annual conference in Lillehammer.

The secretariat is also hosted by ENCN and is located in Oslo and Lillehammer. The secretariat will be headed by Mr Inge Brørs, Secretary General. Other members are deputy Ms Ann Irene Saeternes, Ms Greta Juul and Mr Juri Tomilov as advisers.

Mr Günther Schulz (not on the picture) is its Brussels antenna, connected to the Oslo-region European Office. A work plan for the period of the Norwegian chairmanship is available on the website www.bsssc.com.

BSSSC

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation is a political network for decentralised authorities (subregions) in the ten Baltic Sea littoral states. The network was founded in Stavanger, Norway, 1993. The main organisational bodies are the Chairperson (who is chosen by the Board on a rotational basis for a two-year period), the Board consisting of two representatives of each country, the secretariat that follows the Chairperson, work groups and a rapporteur on Maritime Issues. The main BSSSC event is the annual conference held each year in autumn.

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