

BSSSC 2013-2016

Helsinki-Uusimaa
chairmanship in review



This report has been prepared by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council which held the BSSSC Chairmanship and the Secretariat 2013-2016.

Texts have been contributed by the members of the BSSSC Board and by Bernd Hemingway who is the Deputy Director-General of the CBSS Secretariat. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the BSSSC or Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council.

Design: Jaakko Ranta

Photographs: Tuula Palaste, Jaakko Ranta

Map on page 6: Walter Lindberg

Printed in 2017

www.bsssc.com



Helsinki-Uusimaa
Regional Council

BSSSC 2013-2016

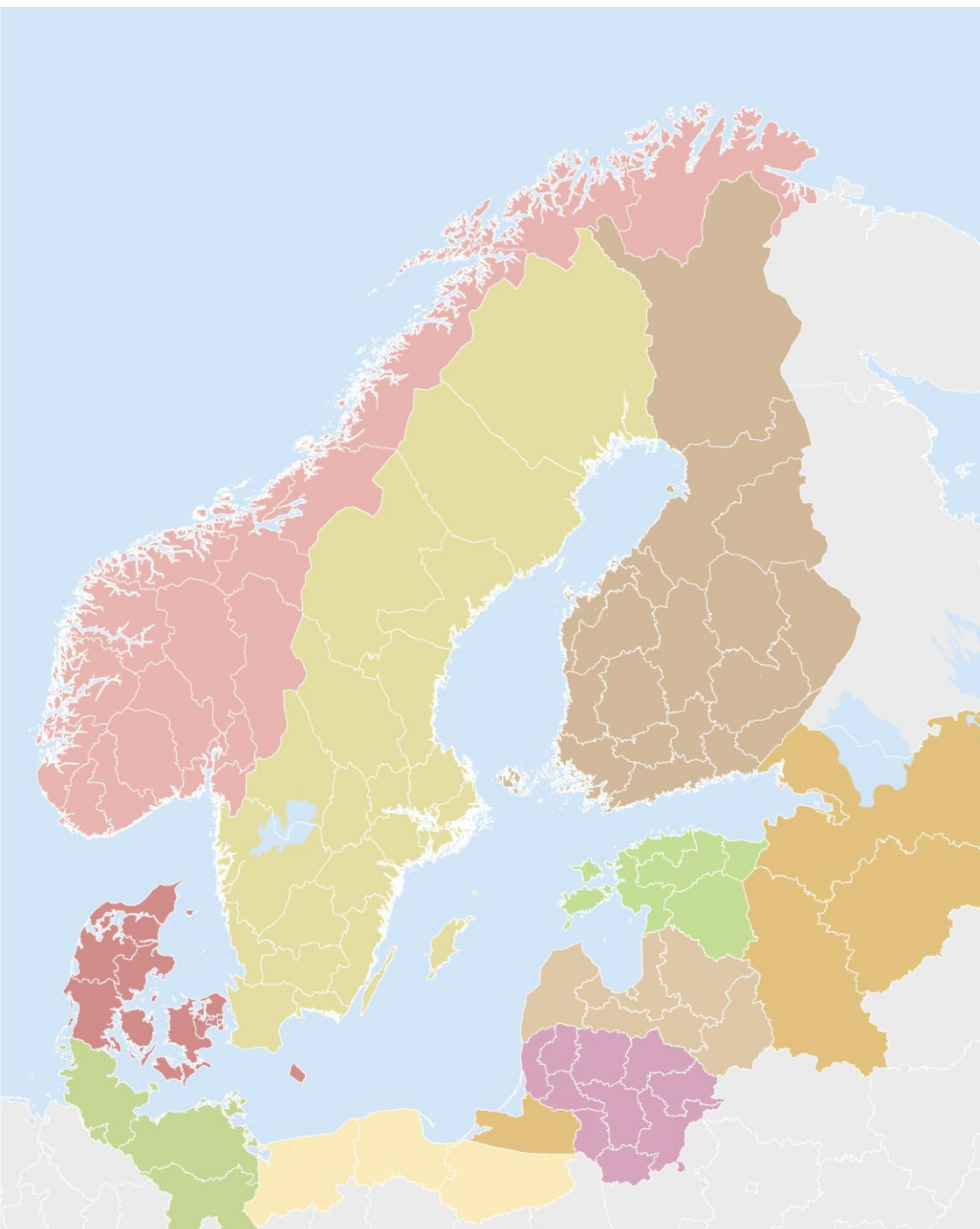
Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship in review

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List of abbreviations

AC – Annual Conference

B7 – B7 Baltic Islands Network

BDF – Baltic Development Forum

BSPC – Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

BSR – Baltic Sea Region

BSSSC – Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation

CBSS – Council of Baltic Sea States

CCI – Cultural and Creative Industries

CEF – Connecting Europe Facility

CNC – Core Network Corridors

CoR – European Committee of the Regions

CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

EEAS – European External Action Services

EFSD – European Fund for Strategic Investment

ENCN – Eastern Norway County Network

ERTMS – European Rail Traffic Management Systems

ESIF – European Structural and Investment Funds

EUSBSR – EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

HELCOM – Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission aka Helsinki Commission

IMO – International Maritime Organisation

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

ITS – Intelligent Transport Systems

MoS – Motorways of the Sea

ND – Northern Dimension

NSB CoRe – North Sea Baltic Connector of Regions

PA – Policy Area

SME – Small and medium –sized enterprises

TEN-T – Trans-European Transport Networks

UBC – Union of Baltic Cities

UN – United Nations

VASAB – Vision & Strategies around the Baltic Sea

Greetings from the BSSSC Chair 2013-2016

By Ossi Savolainen

It has been four years since Helsinki-Uusimaa Region took over the chairmanship in cooperation with other Finnish regions from the West Pomeranian Region in January 2013. In our work plan we highlighted maritime issues, energy and climate issues, youth policy, the Northern and Arctic dimension and cohesion policy as our key themes. I truly hope we have been able to give our best possible input to these policy sectors.

The BSSSC is a unique organisation, the only one representing the regional governments of the prosperous Baltic Sea Region. It has been a great honour to lead this organisation as its chairman. The past four years have been eventful and interesting. I have personally made many new friends and have gotten to know many wonderful people around the Baltic Sea from different regions, countries and organisations.

Since we started our chairmanship four years ago the operating environment of the Baltic Sea Region and the BSSSC has changed drastically. Baltic Sea Region is now in the focal point of global geopolitics. From 2014 onwards Russia has distanced itself from regional and international cooperation. Changes in international politics have raised the issues of security and stability alongside our traditional challenges such as slow economic growth, unemployment and environmental problems.

Many regions around the Baltic Sea have unfortunately taken a backseat in regional cooperation. Helsinki-Uusimaa's chairmanship had to be extended from two to four years, since there were no willing regions to take over. In the 1990s Baltic Sea used to be forerunner and role model for everyone in Europe in regional cooperation. We need to get the spirit

that saw the founding of CBSS and BSSSC back and to make Baltic Sea cooperation great again. When it comes to huge, common challenges for the region we can only overcome them by facing them together. We need to push our efforts to bring all the regions of the Baltic Sea back to our organisation. It is the only way to secure a prosperous future for our region and for our organisation.

We need new ideas and a more positive attitude in Europe. Our long cultural heritage and a long tradition of cooperation can help us in creating new success stories around the Baltic Sea with the help of smart specialization, blue growth and bio-economy.

One of the most important focuses of BSSSC has always been cooperation with other Baltic Sea policy formulating organisations. It is with great pleasure we look back at the dialogue and joint events the BSSSC has had with partner organisations such as the CBSS, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, BDF, UBC, B7 and BSPC during our presidency. The continuation of EUSBSR after 2020 and sustaining sufficient EU funding for these macro-regional programmes for the next multiannual financial framework is essential for transnational regional cooperation.

The BSSSC has at its core a very active group of persons and we can't forget to emphasize the importance of these wonderfully dedicated people. However, if we want to develop BSSSC further, we need more people and more regions taking an active part in our network. To make BSSSC successful and keep it alive, we need active players, high motivation and strong will. New people bring new ideas and new perspectives and improve and strengthen our organisation.

In the future Baltic Sea Region needs new enthusiastic and skilled decision-makers. That is why I am always captivated by the young friends of the BSSSC who attend the youth events and take part in our organisation's activities. Youth policy has always been and hopefully will be a key issue in the BSSSC.

I want to thank you all very warmly for these nearly four years, when I have had the opportunity to lead this organization. I would like to thank the board, including its official members and its civil servants. Also I'd like to thank the Secretariat in Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. I am also sure that we will meet again many times in the future the upcoming BSSSC events and Annual Conferences.

As I am writing this Helsinki-Uusimaa's four-year chairmanship of the BSSSC has ended and we have passed on the chairmanship to the Eastern Norway County Network. We can safely say that the chairmanship is in good hands.

I personally have had a great honour in leading the BSSSC and I hope the very best and all the best of luck to my successor Mr. Roger Ryberg and to the Secretariat in Eastern Norway County Network.

About the BSSSC

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) [correctly pronounced: B·triple-S·C] is a political network for decentralised authorities (subregions) in the Baltic Sea Region.

The organisation was founded in Stavanger, Norway, in 1993. Its participants are regional authorities (level directly below the national level authorities) of the 10 Baltic Sea littoral states: Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Russia.

The BSSSC is a political network whose main organisational bodies are: the Chairperson (elected by the Board on a rotational basis for a two-year period), the Board consisting of two representatives of each of the BSR countries, the Secretariat, that follows the Chairperson and ad hoc working groups. The main BSSSC event is the annual conference held each year in early autumn (September - October).

The BSSSC co-operates closely with other key Baltic Sea Region and European organisations and institutions. The BSSSC has renewed its Declaration of Common Interest with the Committee of the Regions in 2012 and opens its network for other BSR organisations on local and regional level to become participants (B7, UBC).

BSSSC Board 2017

Chairman

Roger Ryberg (Norway, Eastern Norway County Network)

Members

Wieslaw Byczowski (Poland, Pomerania Region)

Olgierd Geblewicz (Poland, West Pomeranian Region)

Andris Jaunsleinis (Latvia, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments)

Nelliya Karpusenкова (Latvia, Youth Member)

Iisakki Kiemunki (Finland, Häme Regional Council)

Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp (Germany, Brandenburg)

Kari Lie (Norway, Youth Member)

Liana Maximova (Russia, Kaliningrad Region)

Stefan Musiolik (Germany, Schleswig-Holstein)

Marili Niits (Estonia, Association of Municipalities of Estonia)

Lars Salvesen (Norway, Eastern Norway County Network)

Ossi Savolainen (Finland, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council)

Arne Tilk (Estonia, Association of Estonian Cities)



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

BSSSC 2013-2016

A review by the BSSSC Secretariat in Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council

In the next chapter the BSSSC Secretariat goes through the activities of the Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship of the BSSSC.

BSSSC's purpose is to promote and advocate the interests of the sub-regions to the decision-makers on all levels of the decision-making process. The real added value of the BSSSC is in creating networks and person-to-person-contacts across the Baltic Sea Region. Contacts are essential in finding project partners, overcoming challenges together and making the Baltic Sea Region a better place. The prosperity of the subregions heavily depends on the wider development of the region, which is why international and interregional cooperation is of great importance.

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council held the chairmanship of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) between 2013 and 2016. Originally the term was planned to be for two years 2013-2014. Because there were no regions willing to take over the chairmanship before 2017, the BSSSC board decided to prolong the term first for 2015 and then for 2016. The 20th Anniversary of the BSSSC was celebrated at the 2013 Annual Conference held in Helsinki.

Officially Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional council took over the chairmanship from the West Pomeranian Region in January 2013. The chair Ossi Savolainen started his term by stressing the utmost importance of the regional co-operation in achieving higher living standards and a cleaner Baltic Sea. The start of the chairmanship term was an especially interesting time, since many regions were evaluating their international cooperation and considering their future objectives

for the EU programming period for the years 2014-2020. After 2014 Russia began to take distance from Baltic Sea cooperation on international and regional level. The BSSSC still recognises the importance of dialogue between Russian Federation in cross-border and transnational cooperation in order to develop Baltic Sea Region to fulfil its potential.

The Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship wanted carry on the work of the previous presidencies by promoting active cooperation between the BSSSC and other Baltic Sea organisations. One of the main priorities of the chairmanship was to prepare regions for digitalisation. As an organisation the BSSSC saw that the Baltic Sea region can take a pioneering role in Europe by providing prerequisites for a network of innovation hubs that promote the creation of digital applications and boost new jobs. BSSSC welcomed the launch of Digital Agenda and used its networks to mobilise the Baltic Sea regions to make full use of relevant funding opportunities.

Cross-cutting themes of the chairmanship were EUSBSR, entrepreneurship and innovations. Working groups were formed around youth policy and maritime policy and rapporteur was named for EUSBSR, Northern and Arctic Dimension, Transport and Infrastructure, and finally for Culture & Regional Identity.

Youth policy continued to be one of the focal points of the BSSSC. Annual youth events were organised alongside Annual Conferences. Youth was also encouraged to take part to the working groups of the BSSSC. Youth working group also established a solid co-operation on youth issues with other Baltic Sea organisations such as Union of Baltic



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

Cities and Euroregion Baltic. Especially this was seen in the Round Table on Baltic Sea Youth Affairs organised by the CBSS Secretariat, where BSSSC participated in dialogue between decision-makers and young people alongside other youth organisations and NGOs.

BSSSC also continued to plead a case for the creation of a Baltic Sea Youth Council in order to strengthen youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC furthermore urged municipalities and regions to implement an active youth involvement policy. Youth cooperation encountered some setbacks during the years, since the two seats in the BSSSC Board for youth representatives could not always be filled.

On maritime issues one of the most important tasks of the Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship of the BSSSC was to find synergy between working groups of all different Baltic Sea organisations, especially with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. BSSSC also continued its active support to HELCOM in its effort to save the environment of the Baltic Sea. BSSSC was granted the status of an observing member in HELCOM in February 2017.

BSSSC continued its commitment to implementation of the European Maritime Policy in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC supported the implementation of IMO and EU Directives on the reduction of sulphur emissions from shipping in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC also continued to contribute the implementation of the Clean Shipping Project, which is a BSSSC initiative included in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

On cohesion policy BSSSC started a working group in 2016 to formulate the position of the regions to EU's cohesion policy post 2020. BSSSC promoted the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance in the implementation of cohesion policy. BSSSC provided a platform on exchanging experiences on how cohesion policy schemes are

implemented in the regions. BSSSC supported the development of regional and transnational projects and functioned as a thematic platform on project development. BSSSC promoted regional innovation strategies for smart specialization and the implementation of objectives of the EUSBSR through relevant Operational Programmes. BSSSC strongly supports maintaining the EUSBSR as an important framework for collaboration in the BSR in the future as well.

On transport and infrastructure BSSSC focused on improving sustainable connectivity, strengthening accessibility and promoting the transport corridors of the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC supported the implementation of relevant recommendations from transnational projects such as the TransBaltic Macroregional Transport Action Plan.

On energy and climate issues BSSSC formulated political requirements of the regions towards decision-making bodies on energy and climate issues and promoted the development and use of renewable energy sources. BSSSC continued to support actions against climate change such as Clean Ship and Cool Bricks and new project initiatives around the regions of the Baltic Sea.

On Northern and Arctic Dimension BSSSC took part in the Northern Dimension Steering Group meetings. BSSSC encouraged co-operation between EU and the Russian Federation in the Northern and Arctic Dimension. BSSSC further continued to participate in NDPHS

On issues regarding culture and regional identity BSSSC formulated political requirements of the regions towards decision-making bodies. BSSSC supported projects suitable to visualize the rich and diverse culture and cultural heritage of the Baltic Sea Region and projects suitable to develop and strengthen the Baltic Sea regional identity. BSSSC supported efforts taken to increase co-operation between Baltic Sea Region cultural-policy bodies on the local, regional and national level.

BSSSC board met 13 times between 2013 and 2017. The first meeting under the Finnish chairmanship was held in Hämeenlinna in Finland in February 2013 and the last one in Stockholm in November 2016. Seven of the board meetings were held in Finland (Hämeenlinna and Helsinki twice, Kuopio, Turku, Forssa), two in Brussels, and Norway (Kristiansand), Denmark (Bornholm), Germany (Berlin), Poland (Gdansk) and Sweden (Stockholm) all held one board meeting respectively. Annual conferences were held in Helsinki (2013), Jurmala (2014), Visby (2015), and Hämeenlinna (2016). BSSSC launched its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts in 2015.

During the term Regional Mayor Ossi Savolainen held the post of the BSSSC Chair and Secretary-Generals of BSSSC were Janne Tamminen and Heli Halla-aho. Others involved in the daily work of the Secretariat were Jaakko Mikkola, Tuula Palaste, Josefina Bjurström and Jaakko Ranta. Most of the daily work of the secretariat was done with practicalities: Preparing meetings, writing minutes and coordinating the preparations of policy papers.

Structures and organisations like BSSSC force us to interact and that is why they are important. When we debate, discuss, do mundane things together and meet we make new connections and get new ideas. The more the interaction, links and connections the lesser is the risk for conflict. This is something that the BSSSC achieves on a regional level, between regional actors, and that is also why it was originally founded in 1993 as a result of the establishment of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). That is the true value, result and achievement of the BSSSC.

Annual Conferences

2013 Helsinki

Policymaking after 2014 – Towards New Dimensions in the Baltic Sea Co-operation. 220 participants from 11 countries.

The 21st BSSSC Annual Conference "Policymaking after 2013 – Towards New Dimensions in the Baltic Sea Co-operation" took place at the Marina Congress Center right next to the port of Helsinki on the 17th and 18th of October 2013. The conference celebrated the 20th anniversary of BSSSC and was moderated by Udo Biss.

The event gathered 220 participants from political and administrative level (local, regional, national and EU level) as well as representatives from academia, organizations, NGOs and the private sector from the 11 countries taking part in the Baltic Sea cooperation. The conference broadly covered traditional BSSSC policy areas such as maritime policy, energy and climate, youth, the northern and arctic dimension and cohesion policy.

Speakers included representatives of the EU Commission, European Parliament, and Committee of the Regions, Republic of Finland, CBSS, CPMR and many more.



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

2014 Jūrmala

Time for New Beginnings and Innovation in the Baltic Sea Region.

145 participants from 11 countries

At the instigation of the BSSSC board member Andris Jaunsleinis the 22nd Annual Conference of BSSSC was held in Jūrmala, Latvia 16 October 2014. Jūrmala is famous for its spas and for the longest beach in the Baltic Sea. This conference searched innovative solutions for the future. Culture, low carbon economies, green transport, blue growth, energy efficiency and smart regional development were listed as areas that could bring new growth and success stories to the Baltic Sea Region.

Conference was organized in cooperation with Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, City of Jūrmala and Council of the Baltic Sea States. Speakers included representatives of the hosting organizations and Republic of Latvia, European Union, Committee of the Regions, VASAB, Baltic Sea Region Programme, and CPMR. The Conference was moderated by Juris Šteinbergs.

2015 Visby

Digital Agenda – New Chances and Challenges for the Regions of the Baltic Sea. 95 participants from 11 countries

Region Gotland hosted the BSSSC Annual Conference 2015 in conference & event centre Wisby Strand in Visby between September 23 and 25. Annual Conference continued on the themes of the Jurmala conference previous year and gathered over 150 participants from 11 countries.

Digitalisation and digital agenda for the Baltic Sea Region was high on the agenda. A special focus was given to the Interreg cooperation which celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Conference was moderated by Meit Fohlin.

2016 Hämeenlinna

Bridge over Troubled Waters – Value of Regional Co-Operation in Challenging Times. 149 participants from 12 countries.

Häme Region hosted the 24th BSSSC Annual Conference in Hämeenlinna in 14-16 September. The conference was dedicated to the European challenges that all regions are facing in today's Europe, but also overcoming them together via cooperation. Baltic Sea Region faces huge challenges in form of citizen's lack of trust in the political system, refugee crisis, EU-Russia relations, weak economic growth, extremism and xenophobia. The message of the conference was that these huge challenges can only be overcome together via cooperation. Basic function of the BSSSC is to create networks around the Baltic Sea region. Maintaining networks and people-to-people contacts is especially important in challenging times.

Conference was moderated by Sari Rautio.



Photograph: Jaakko Ranta



Photograph: Jaakko Ranta

POLICY SECTORS OF THE BSSSC

Northern Dimension and the BSSSC

By **Ann Irene Sæternes**

Introduction

The Northern Dimension (ND) is a policy framework for cooperation involving the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. It aims at providing a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation as well as strengthening stability and promoting economic integration, competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe. Geographically, the Northern Dimension covers North-West Russia, the Baltic Sea and the Arctic regions. *Eastern Norway County Network has acted as BSSSC rapporteur on ND during the chairmanship of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region.*

BSSSC and the Northern Dimension

BSSSC has been engaged in the Northern Dimension since the very beginning in 1999. Several BSSSC ad hoc working groups have contributed with input at different stages of the Northern Dimension policy over the years. With the Political Declaration and the Northern Dimension Policy Framework - the Northern Dimension in 2006 entered a new stage of cooperation where it among others recognized the important part regional and local actors play in the process.

The BSSSC took immediate note of this, and the Board adopted a paper on a sub-regional dimension within Northern Dimension at its meeting in spring 2007. This paper was forwarded to the first ND Steering Group

meeting, and resulted in a close cooperation between BSSSC and the ND Steering Group during 2007 - 2010.

BSSSC has in its work stressed the fact that regions can deliver practical results from their cooperation in the Northern Dimension area - contributing to the implementation of the ND policy on the ground. There are many activities at local and regional level in the Baltic Sea region that are relevant to the Northern Dimension. With regard to financial schemes, BSSSC has been advocating for systems with a broad and open access for all regional and local actors - including Russia.

Northern Dimension under the Helsinki-Uusimaa Chairmanship 2013-2016

After a period of less focus on Northern Dimension from BSSSC side - the Finnish chairmanship put the issue back on the agenda in 2013. The work towards a sub-regional dimension within Northern Dimension was taken up again, and the channels to ND partners were re-established. The BSSSC Rapporteur on Northern Dimension held meetings with representatives from the EEAS (European External Action Services) as well as the Norwegian and Russian Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

During the BSSSC Annual Conference 2013 in Helsinki, a parallel session was organised with focus on Northern and Arctic Dimension. In April 2014, BSSSC was invited to take part in the Northern Dimension Senior Officials meeting in Oslo. The BSSSC rapporteur, Mr. Roger Ryberg, promoted inclusion of sub-regional actors in the work of the Northern Dimension.

BSSSC recommended making use of the full capacity of regional and local abilities in the cooperation work within the Northern Dimension.

Mr. Ryberg stated that this should not be organised separate from cooperation at national level, but be managed within the respective national cooperation frameworks – e.g. the Steering Group and the ND Partnerships. BSSSC offered to become a platform for involvement of regional and local authorities and to take part as an observer at the Steering Group meetings.

An official notification of the BSSSC request was included in the Chairman's Conclusion from the meeting.

“The Senior Officials took note of the presentation by the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC), acknowledged the importance of sub-regional cooperation and asked the Steering Group to reflect on how cooperation with organisations representing the sub-regional level in the ND area could be further developed”.

As a follow up the BSSSC Rapporteur had dialogue-meetings with three of the four ND partners (EU, Norway and Russia) to promote inclusion of BSSSC as an observer in the Steering Group - representing sub-regions in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Since October 2014, BSSSC has been invited to attend the Steering Group meetings and has reported from sub-regional level in the BSR.

The Ukrainian crisis has hampered the work of the Northern Dimension the past years and the tensions have resulted in less meetings. No official meetings at political level have taken place. The work in the Northern Dimension partnerships have continued in the period and BSSSC has especially worked with the Northern Dimension Cultural Partnership - through the BSSSC Rapporteur on Culture (Schleswig-Holstein).

Northern dimension and cooperation with Russia has been highlighted in all Resolutions from BSSSC Annual Conferences in the period 2013 -

2016. In the latest Resolution from Hämeenlinna conference in September 2016 BSSSC stated the following;

"With regard to the Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with Russia BSSSC recognizes the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Russia on the local and the regional level despite the problematic political situation. BSSSC strives for the involvement of the sub-regional level in the Northern Dimension and is committed to use its role as observer in the ND Steering Group - to facilitate information exchange between ND structures and sub-regional actors in the BSR".

Northern Dimension has been on the agenda in the BSSSC Board meetings throughout the period of the Finnish Chairmanship. The Rapporteur, Mr. Roger Ryberg, his deputy or the board civil from Eastern Norway County Network, Ms. Ann Irene Saeternes, have reported on the activities and meetings within Northern Dimension in the period 2013 - 2016. Due to the challenging times in the Baltic Sea Region and Europe with regard to the Ukraine crises - the work has had less progress than expected in the beginning of the period. Nevertheless, BSSSC will continue to have Northern Dimension and cooperation with Russia on its agenda and will continue the dialog with the ND partners, the ND partnerships and the ND Steering Group.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme

In projects under the second call of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme in 2017 Russian partners will be involved as full partners with money allocated to the programme from Russian national budget. This will open up new opportunities for bottom-up cooperation within the Northern Dimension area in the years to come. BSSSC has advocated for this possibility in the last years - among others BSSSC has in its conference resolutions 2013 - 2015 urged the Russian Federation and the

European Commission to agree on solutions to allow for active participation of Russian actors in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

Maritime Policy in the BSSSC

By the BSSSC Secretariat in Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council

Maritime policy is a very natural part of BSSSC's agenda, since most of the member regions are maritime regions and maritime policy was also one of the key themes of the Helsinki-Uusimaa's chairmanship of the BSSSC. During the Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship BSSSC actively sought cooperation with other Baltic Sea organisations, especially with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. BSSSC has taken part in European Maritime Days every year and BSSSC also applied and was granted an observational status in the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as HELCOM.

BSSSC established a working group on maritime policy already in 2008. Working group was headed by the State of Schleswig-Holstein from 2008 to 2013 and from there onwards by Helsinki-Uusimaa Region.

The working group seeks to cooperate with other Baltic Sea organisations and actors regarding maritime affairs, which is why it cooperates closely with the Maritime Issues Working Group of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. Working group strives to bring together maritime actors of the region and to foster target-oriented dialogue.

Main objectives of the BSSSC's maritime policy are:

- Cleaner Baltic Sea
- Prosperous maritime economy
- Sustainability
- Mutual benefit by cooperation and exchange
- A strong maritime voice from the regional level.

BSSSC sees huge potential in blue growth. Shipping, coastal and cruise tourism, offshore wind, shipbuilding, aquaculture and blue biotechnologies are the most promising sectors of maritime economy in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC calls for efforts at national and regional level to finance these sectors and SMEs to become more competitive.

Cohesion policy is a relevant instrument for improving the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region in the maritime field and regional smart-specialisation strategies can also be a source of inspiration for EU policy-makers.

Saving the Baltic Sea was and is a key focus in BSSSC's maritime policies. The BSSSC continued to support HELCOM in its activities in protecting the Baltic Sea.

In the future the BSSSC will continue dialogue and cooperation with other Baltic Sea organisations aiming to formulate an integrated maritime policy in the Baltic Sea Region.



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

Transport Policy Report 2013-2016

By Jon Halvard Eide

Vest-Agder County Council assumed the function as rapporteur for transport issues at the board meeting in Bornholm in June 2013. This report highlights the main issues reported at board meetings, events organised at Annual Conferences (AC) and topics addressed in AC resolutions.

Issues

The reporting on transport has mainly concentrated on the following issues:

- Enhancing accessibility to peripheral and maritime regions in the BSR
- Strengthening the role and support for maritime transport
- Improving the conditions for sustainable transport
- Governance – facilitating the participation of regions and ports etc. in the forums established to implement the TEN-T core network corridors

TEN-T core network corridors in the BSR

The rapporteur has monitored the development of the core network corridors (CNCs) crossing the BSR: Scandinavia – Mediterranean (mainly), North Sea – Baltic and Baltic Adriatic on the basis of information from BSSSC participants and CPMR members involved in relevant corridor forums.

Connecting Europe Facility and Motorways of the Sea

The development of issues related to Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and Motorways of the Sea (MoS) has mainly been followed through the CPMR Baltic Sea and North Sea Commissions and their transport working groups, as well as through the CPMR Intercommission working group in transport. As demonstrated below, several resolutions from the BSSSC Annual Conferences in this period have addressed the TEN-T, CEF and MoS.

Projects of relevance for the Baltic Sea Region

The following projects in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme have been shadowed and reported on:

- TransGovernance
- Scandria 2Act
- TEN-Tacle
- NSB CoRe

Several BSSSC participants are partners to these projects.

Transport issues in the Annual Conference resolutions

The resolution from the AC in Helsinki in 2013 did not contain any references to transport issues.

2014 Jurmala – innovative approaches to green transport

- The EU Member States should allow an adequate regional representation in relevant stakeholder forums which the Commission and Member States have established for the implementation of the TEN-T core network, in particular for the North Sea - Baltic Corridor and for the Baltic – Adriatic Corridor.
- The European Commission and EU Member States are requested to take into consideration the recommendations from the

TransGovernance project on multi-level governance in the implementation of transnational transport corridors.

- The BSSSC calls for the establishment of uniform European standards, e.g. plug-in technologies and charging/filling infrastructure for vehicles, for the uptake of alternative fuels in the transport sector.
- The BSSSC encourages Regional Authorities in the Baltic Sea Region to actively use the Horizon 2020 Work Programme on green, efficient and integrated transport, in synergy with the relevant objectives of the Baltic Sea Region Interreg programme.
- The BSSSC supports the establishment of a European funding scheme for sustainable and efficient freight transport services (cf. a recent consultation by DG Move) in continuation of the Marco Polo programmes.
- The EU should introduce necessary European support schemes to ease the costs of complying with the EU Directive on reduction of Sulphur emissions from shipping.

AC Visby 2015 – transport in the context of the Digital Agenda

a.) In the context of the Digital Agenda, the BSSSC acknowledges the importance of intelligent transport systems (ITS) for efficient, sustainable and safe transport services and for modal integration. Thus, ITS is vital for fully exploiting the capacity of transport infrastructure and for realizing the benefits from planned TEN-T projects in the BSR.

b.) However, only a small share of the Rail Baltica Corridor is meeting the requirements of the European Rail Traffic Management Systems (ERTMS). The BSSSC therefore calls upon the member states in the BSR to work for a speedy and coordinated roll-out of ERTMS standards along the Rail Baltica Corridor. The same applies for the installment of ITS applications along the major road network in the Baltic States.

c.) In order to further improve the competitiveness of rail transport, the member states in the BSR are also encouraged to harmonise technical parameters such as gauge dimensions and electrical standards between countries.

d.) The European Commission is requested to draft a regulatory framework in preparation for a large scale roll-out of autonomous vehicles - having a great potential for making the transport system safer, more efficient, sustainable, accessible and affordable.

AC 2016 in Hämeenlinna - Growth corridors

The BSR is crossed by three core network corridors (CNCs) under the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T): Scandinavian-Mediterranean, North Sea-Baltic and Baltic-Adriatic. The BSSSC believes that these corridors have a significant potential for stimulating sustainable economic growth in the BSR beyond the transport sector itself and beyond the immediate territories they cross.

In order to fully realise the benefits of the CNCs crossing the BSR, the BSSSC would like to underline the importance of the following factors, and requests the European Commission and member states to take them duly into consideration in the future implementation of the corridors:

- ⊗ Improve cross border interoperability by removing physical and administrative bottlenecks
- ⊗ Synchronize transport planning and investments between the BSR countries, incl. Norway and Russia
- ⊗ Link long distance transports to urban transport systems, and facilitate for last mile connections

- ⊗ Facilitate for a large-scale roll out of low-emission vehicles & technologies, with cross border harmonisation of technological specifications and density of charging systems and filling stations for alternative fuels
- ⊗ Better connect second level nodes and access routes to the CNCs by increasing financial allocations to the comprehensive network of the TEN-T, and by introducing more favourable co-financing rates for projects on this network.
- ⊗ Multi-level governance, also allowing for the involvement in corridor forums of regions, ports and transport hubs not located directly on the corridors
- ⊗ Fully integrate the perspective and needs of the business sector and transport operators
- ⊗ Improve the capacity of stakeholders to benefit from the various financial instruments under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)

Relevant sessions at Annual Conferences

Workshop on maritime clusters and ports and the AC in Helsinki in 2013

The workshop addressed the challenges of the major ports in the Central BSR, incl. relation to EU policy frameworks and funding instruments. Also relevant projects addressing maritime transport issues were presented.

Workshop on innovative approaches to green transport at the AC in Jurmala 2014

The workshop heard presentations and had discussions on the following topics:

- Renewable energy and green transport solutions (biofuel, Hydrogen)
- Solutions for sustainable public transport – results from the More Baltic Biogas Bus project
- Cooperation for reducing ship and port emissions in the Baltic Sea Region on the basis of the experiences from the Interreg BSR project InnoShip

Transport in the context of the Digital Agenda at the AC in Visby 2015

Mr. Michael Glotz-Richter from the City of Bremen gave a lecture on "Development of autonomous transport solutions & technologies – a game changer for the next decades", followed by a discussion among the participants.

Session on Blue Growth at the AC in 2016 in Hämeenlinna

The session partly touched upon issues related to maritime transport and ports (Turku, Gdansk) out of a business development perspective. The intention was originally to organise a session on "Growth Corridors", but this session had to be cancelled due to unavailability of relevant resource persons.

Recommendations for the way forward

It is recommended that the future reporting on transport is organised in a more integrated and inclusive manner, also involving input from and continuous dialogue with other board members and participating regions which are involved in TEN-T corridor forums and/or projects. It is also considered necessary to establish and strengthen the relations with the EUSBSR Policy Area for transport and the Northern Dimension Partnership for Transport and Logistics. Such measures would strengthen the capacity of the BSSSC to respond to EU policy developments and to the engage with relevant stakeholders in the transport sector. These ideas have also been submitted to the Secretary General under the ENCN Chairmanship from 2017.

Political Priority Culture!

By Stefan Musiolik

Within the BSSSC Board Schleswig-Holstein is acting as rapporteur on culture. At the same time Schleswig-Holstein, together with Poland, is Coordinator of the Policy Area Culture (PA Culture) within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). This coincidence offers good opportunities to bring regional interests into the discussions and fora of the EUSBSR and, vice versa, opens up possibilities to communicate EUSBSR project results to the regional policy level.

In February 2013 culture became a EUSBSR policy area. It was also in 2013 when I offered to take responsibility as rapporteur on culture within the BSSSC Board which was unanimously agreed and strongly supported. From then on I used the BSSSC Board meetings to inform about PA Culture activities, about ongoing and planned projects thus opening the possibility to get involved. One example for good synergies: In May 2016 the BSSSC Board decided to support two PA Culture flagship projects in their application for the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme by getting involved as an associated organization:

Creative Ports – a project aiming at increasing entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of CCI companies (cultural and creative industries) in the Baltic Sea Region as well as linking innovation actors with the municipal and policy-making level in order to improve the ecosystem for CCI in the BSR;

Baltic Sea Region Integrated Maritime Cultural Heritage Management – a project aiming at developing spatial planning solutions creating win-win situations between the protection of maritime heritage assets and economic and environmental interests.

In May 2017 the Interreg Monitoring Committee will decide on the funding of these two projects.

Another good opportunity to disseminate PA Culture project results and to generate new impetus from the regions are the BSSSC Annual Conferences:

We firstly used the plenary of the **BSSSC Annual Conference** in October 2013 in Helsinki to communicate PA Culture objectives and to discuss chances and challenges for cultural cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region between us as PA Culture coordinators and representatives of other BSR organizations like e.g. the Council of the Baltic Sea States and Ars Baltica.

In her speech at the 22nd **BSSSC Annual Conference** in October 2014 in Jurmala/Latvia Anke Spoorendonk, Minister of Justice, Cultural and European Affairs of Land Schleswig-Holstein, underlined the importance of culture as a driver for regional innovation: *“The entire sector of creative industries is gathering speed in the Baltic Sea Region also beyond the Nordic countries. Our aim must be to improve networking between the players from the cultural and creative industries and those from other businesses and sectors in order to spur economic and social innovations in the region.”*

A seminar held during the conference focused on **culture as a driver of social innovation**. Representatives from the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture, the Cultural Committee of the Union of Baltic Cities and Ars Baltica as well as cultural operators from Kaliningrad and Estonia discussed concepts, ideas, projects and visions showcasing the value of culture and creativity for a socially innovative Baltic Sea Region.

In September 2015 the **BSSSC Annual Conference** took place in Visby on the Swedish island of Gotland. Digitization was the key topic. In her

speech at the opening session, Minister Anke Spoorendonk emphasized the value of regional cooperation against the background of the crisis between the EU and Russia and the at that time huge flow of refugees to Europe. As regards the topic of the conference, Anke Spoorendonk referred both to the tremendous opportunities digital technologies offer also for culture and creativity and to its risks as concerns amongst others in the field of data privacy and copyright-related law.

We dedicated one of the parallel sessions of the conference to the question **how to foster economic growth and access to cultural assets through digital technologies**. Dr. Lissa Holloway-Attaway from the University of Skövde gave an academic input which was lively discussed. The presentation of best practice projects completed the program.

With the slogan “Bridge over troubled waters” the BSSSC dedicated its 24th **Annual Conference** in September 2016 in Hämeenlinna/Finland to the current political challenges in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. Anke Spoorendonk, Minister of Justice, Cultural and European Affairs of Land Schleswig-Holstein held a highly regarded speech pointing back to the founding years of Baltic Sea cooperation: *“From its very beginnings, Baltic Sea cooperation also wished to serve as a model that is based on shared values: a model for democracy, tolerance, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The basis for that is our joint cultural heritage. We ought to make renewed efforts to build upon and to strengthen this basis”*. Anke Spoorendonk ended her speech with the following words:

“I am Minister of Cultural and European Affairs because I am absolutely convinced that both aspects supplement each other perfectly. European integration, just like integration in the Baltic Sea region won’t work on the basis of contracts and agreements alone. We are witnessing that currently; the Brexit referendum is an example. Integration across borders must always appeal as well to people’s emotions and hearts. And this is where culture can make the difference.”

In Hämeenlinna we also conducted a session on culture. Again the integrative force of culture was the topic. Under the headline **Culture - Driving force for regional integration and social inclusion** we presented best practice examples from our region. For example, Larry Okey Ugwu, Director of the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdansk illustrated very vividly how the Cultural Centre contributes to the integration of immigrants in Pomerania. This he did the more convincingly as Larry himself started his life in Poland as an immigrant. The project presentations were followed by a panel discussion including e.g. Bernd Hemingway, the Deputy Director of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Jaana Simula, Chairperson of the UBC Cultural Cities Commission (Union of Baltic Cities) and Kari Lie from the BSSSC Youth. The question for discussion was "What can and should politics do to foster regional integration and social inclusion through cultural interventions". One import result: funding possibilities for cultural projects in the Baltic Sea Region are insufficient and need to be improved. We will be putting this request e.g. in our BSSSC position paper on Cohesion Policy after 2020.

Youth Policy in the BSSSC

By Malgorzata Ludwiczek

Youth work in the BSSSC is based on the “European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”, the BSSSC programming documents, and the resolutions of the BSSSC.

“The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies. Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, (...). Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”
-“Preamble of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”, Strasbourg 2003.

In the BSSSC, a similar approach was expressed by the BSSSC programming document “Integrated youth policy in the Baltic Sea Region’. For the BSSSC “integrated” means that decisions made in all fields of politics should take into consideration the impact on youth as a central factor of future society. It also means including the work of organizations, the experience of individuals and the variety of methods and strategies being used in youth work. “Integrated” reaches out to integrate young people with disadvantages and a migrant background into society and it is based on equal rights for young and old, female and male. Integrated Youth Policy is based on democracy, equality, freedom and human rights and carries the responsibility for the protection of our natural and cultural heritage, both for the younger generation and for future generations.

The youth policy has been one of the main priorities of the BSSSC for many years now and it has been continued by Helsinki-Uusimaa Chairmanship. As in previous years, youth representatives from the BSSSC Youth Team have organised their own youth meetings, preceding the BSSSC Annual Conferences. They aim to prepare the young participants for issues that are raised during the Annual Conferences by politicians and experts and to work out the message that the youth members wish to give to the decision-makers.

The BSSSC **Youth Event 2013: *Youth for Work!*** was organized in **Helsinki, Finland** the 15th and 16th of October 2013 back-to-back with the 21st BSSSC Annual Conference. Nearly 40 youth representatives from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Poland and Russia participated in the event. The project was partly funded by the Youth in Action Programme. The main event of the project was a multinational workshop on how to tackle youth unemployment on the local and regional level. The working groups produced interesting and innovative ideas, and results of the workshop were presented at the BSSSC Annual Conference. The workshop proved that solving difficult questions does not always have to be about policies – simple practical solutions can also make a difference. The youth event also included an excursion to the Aalto Entrepreneurship Society, a student-run entrepreneurship community and startup ecosystem. After the youth event the participants joined the BSSSC Annual Conference.



Photograph: Jaakko Ranta

14th -17th October 2014 , BSSSC Youth Team met in **Jūrmala , Latvia** on the occasion of the 22nd BSSSC Annual Conference *Time for new beginnings and innovation in the Baltic Sea Region*. Youngsters from Germany, Norway, Poland and Finland had a discussion about their view on the main conference issues such as innovation in the regional policies, smart specialisation, culture and social innovation. There was also conversation about the future of the BSSSC Youth Network.

Youth event in Drammen, Norway in April 2015 was a great link between the 22nd BSSSC conference in Jūrmala and the 23rd Conference in Visby. The participants choose one out of four topics of interest: Youth and Health, Social Innovation, Green Politics, School and work, and the result of their discussions was incorporated in a draft work plan for the Youth Team of the BSSSC. Study visit to the “*Arbeidsinstituttet*” Buskerud in Drammen gave an overview of an innovative training program for youth in high school age, focusing on strengthening a sense of empowerment and to provide practice-training, often in collaboration with a high school.

In Visby, during the 23rd BSSSC Annual Conference, 2015, the BSSSC Youth Team had again a chance to get together for 4 days. Youth participants from Norway, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and Sweden casted light to the subject of digital evolution on the ground of education, development and its impact on youth. There were presentations and the practical workshop focused on film making and editing. One of the plenary sessions of the BSSSC AC was handed over to the youth. Nelija Karpunkensova and Vladimir Svet were moderating panel discussions, Gerd Tarand prepared the presentation about digital evolution in Estonia. The speakers invited by the youth presented e-learning systems and the company which was established in a small town of Visby, nonetheless, having millions of users. As the Youth Network of the BSSSC celebrated its 10th anniversary, Mr. Ossi Savolainen, the BSSSC Chairman honored previous BSSSC Youth Board

Members for their impact, cooperation and work for the young people. Pawel Grządko, one of the first youth board members said “the BSSSC Youth Network is an example of excellent cooperation, building mutual respect and understanding, and solidarity”.

The event was prepared by former and current Youth Board members. In the BSSSC the Youth Board Members have the same membership as all the other Board Members and have, therefore, full rights of speech. Through the Youth Board Members the youth of the Baltic Sea Region have a unique position and opportunity to get their voice heard and their opinions expressed. During Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship, the position was held by Hanna Kivimäki from Finland, Nellija Karpusenкова from Latvia and Kari Lie from Norway.

The youth meeting in Hämeenlinna, Cultural Inclusion and Baltic Sea Vision 2030 back to back with the 23rd BSSSC Annual Conference, prepared young participants for presentation their vision of the BSR in 2030, at the 7th Annual EUSBSR Forum in Stockholm. The workshop on youth affairs called “Nothing about us without us” was organised by the BSSSC in co-operation with the Union of the Baltic Cities and Euroregion Baltic. For the first time the title “Nothing about us without us” had been used in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, at the BSSSC youth conference in the framework of the EUSBSR, in Hamburg, Germany, 3-4 February 2009. At that time the message of the young people was:

“Politicians and institutions of today should be aware of their present decisions having much more influence on future generations than on their own present generation. They should follow the core principle of European youth policy, which is: “Nothing about us without us”

The aim of the seminar in Stockholm was to raise again the voice of the young people of the Baltic Sea Region and bring their views and

proposals into the discussion on Baltic Sea Region Vision 2030. The main message from the panel discussion with the youth representatives, politicians from local and regional level and representatives from the EUSBSR, was that youth should be talked to and not just talked about and young people should be included in all fields of decision-making not just youth affairs. Next step is to decide how to achieve this.

Taking in mind the difficulty of achieving that demand it should be noted, however, that the inclusion of young people in a real dialogue and participation is fundamental to the development of democratic structures and the development of a sense of regional identity. In the era of globalization, where there is a lot of pressure on the job and residential mobility surrounded by the variety of choices for life, it is still important to encourage young people to remain interested in the regional issues, to participate in public discourses and to actively participate in decision-making processes in the Baltic Sea Region, as it has become a big challenge for all actors involved. The BSSSC under Helsinki-Uusimaa chairmanship contributed greatly to that significant goal.

FUTURE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Value of Regional Cooperation as a tool to Address Global Challenges

By Bernd Hemingway

When Member States created the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1992, another challenging time, the aim was to support European integration and to create trust amongst the States in the Baltic Sea Region.

In 1992 only two of the CBSS member states were also EU member states. Today 25 years later the setting looks different. So again, does regional cooperation in such a globalized world make sense? My answer, which certainly doesn't come as a surprise to anybody, is yes, it makes a lot of sense. So let me take the next pages to argue my case.

Why is regional cooperation so important in a Baltic Sea Region where the Sea separates but also connects?

What are the common challenges and what are the common solutions?

For sure there are a number of global challenges that have an impact on the region and in particular on the political dialogue in the region and for sure these are challenges that we will not be able to address on a regional level. I think for example about the situation in Syria or in Ukraine.

But there are others that we can, even must address on the regional level. Allow me to give you three examples where global challenges need also regional solutions.

Firstly, let us look into the new sustainable development goals as they were agreed amongst the UN member states last year.

All of the 17 identified goals are relevant for the Baltic Sea Region. The first high level political discussions took place already in November last year. BSSSC is an active member of CBSS's Expert Group working for the initiative Baltic 2030. The initiative helps to prioritize the implementation of the UN's Agenda 2030 goals and serve as an overall implementation arm on the regional level. In general – the 2030 Agenda most important principle is that you cannot to “choose” some of the goals, but you have to implement all of them holistically. On the other hand you have to decide priorities and time lines for a good implementation on the regional level.

Let me pick some of those goals where I think the regional approach is the most obvious.

Goal 13 (climate action), goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) – goal 14 (life below water) are those that come to my mind and I could continue. The next steps for the Baltic 2030 initiative are the elaboration and adoption of the action plan under the Icelandic Presidency, which will allow the incoming Swedish Presidency to start the ambitious implementation of the action plan.

Secondly, let me refer to another big UN event, the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This is the global commitment to people's resilience, health and well-being.

Again, we have a global standard setting process, where regional implementation is of utmost importance and where we as the CBSS working very closely with the relevant UN agency.

When it comes to civil protection, forest fires, floods, environmental disasters in the Baltic Sea it becomes rather obvious that none of the countries, in particular if something happens in a Border Region, has the means to address these catastrophic events. Good communication,

collaboration and the spirit of helping each other is important. This is what we discuss and train on the regional level.

Thirdly, the wider area of what one could call “soft security” is an area where regional cooperation is important. Fighting organized crime is an issue where criminals don’t care about borders or even benefit from it when law enforcement agencies are not able to cooperate effectively.

The same goes without saying for the fight against trafficking in human beings, a cross border crime with its specific challenges for our region with countries of origin, transit and destination.

Talking about cross-border, modern border management must be work done together from both sides of the border and here comes the added value of the regional border cooperation.

Last but not least the challenges posed by the migratory flows into the region and here as an example the challenge of unaccompanied migrant children. We work here together to share good practices in prevention, early intervention, protection, and child-friendly justice.

The above are just some examples where regional cooperation is a must in times of global challenges. In addition to these needs for regional cooperation there are further areas requiring answers on the level of the Baltic Sea Region.



Photograph: Jaakko Ranta

Our political masters tasked us to work on regional identity, where culture plays an important role. Culture is, at the same time, an important economic factor looking at creative industries as one example. Tourism is another sector where the region can benefit from its strong culture but also from its “safe reputation”. Tourism can furthermore play an important role in the employment sector already nowadays providing work for thousands.

Last but not least the importance of people to people contact and here I think in particular about (higher) education but also about the research and science sector.

The above should give a selection of examples highlighting the importance of regional cooperation, creating trust, better communication and understanding. It furthermore creates personal contacts and allows common solutions.

It reminds every country that it has an equal stake and participation to secure the future of the region.

BSSSC's Position on Cohesion Policy After 2020

By BSSSC Secretariat in Helsinki-Uusimaa Region

In February 2017 BSSSC Board adopted BSSSC's position on EU cohesion policy after 2020. Preparation of the position paper was one of the BSSSC's main priorities for winter 2016-2017. In the next chapters BSSSC Secretariat from the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council summarizes BSSSC's position.

EU cohesion policy is essential for the harmonious regional development in the Baltic Sea Region. As a transnational network of decentralised regional and local authorities BSSSC wants to contribute to the development of cohesion policy. This is why BSSSC supports political declaration "A strong renewed regional policy for all regions post 2020" signed by 337 regions, local authorities and interregional organisations during the Summit of Regions on 28 September 2016. BSSSC also acknowledges the remarkable results of cohesion policy and also the growing pressure on cohesion policy to become more efficient. BSSSC urges the responsible EU institutions to have new regulations ready by mid-2019 to enable member states and regions to start well prepared into the next funding period.

Role of cohesion policy

BSSSC is convinced that the prominent role of cohesion policy among EU policies must be maintained beyond 2020. European Structural and Investment Funds provide stability, reduce development disparities between European regions, and strengthen regional and social cohesion

in Europe. Cohesion policy should also be seen as investment policy, because it contributes strongly to growth and jobs in the EU.

BSSSC is concerned about tendencies in the European Commission to prefer directly managed instruments to instruments of shared management. European and global challenges can't be successfully tackled by European policy unless the actors on regional level are not truly involved in the implementation. BSSSC also stresses the high importance of European Territorial Cooperation for integration and a prosperous and peaceful neighbourhood between European regions. The support of urban development and urban-rural linkages is also an important part of cohesion policy that should be maintained.

BSSSC emphasises that cohesion will only be able to achieve its aims by supporting EU policies on the ground and deliver results if the over-regulation of the policy is finally abolished and the administrative burden is radically reduced.

Cohesion policy for growth and jobs in Europe

BSSSC insists that the current share of the budgetary allocation for cohesion policy should be at least maintained in the next funding period. Cohesion policy has given regional actors the means to implement the EU 2020 strategy in their regions. In this sense cohesion policy has become the most important European investment policy and future cohesion policy should also stay firmly embedded into the leading EU-strategies.

In the next programming period the regions most lagging behind should continue to receive most of the cohesion funding in accordance with the Article 174 of the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union.

However, BSSSC believes that cohesion policy in the future must also take into account the regions that contribute significantly to the economic growth in the EU. By increasing the relative share of funding allocated to more developed regions these regions can be kept motivated and on board with the policy.

Reliability

Reliability of funding is the cornerstone of a successful cohesion policy. BSSSC emphasises that even in the case of more flexible EU budget in the future, cohesion policy programmes must stay reliably financed in the long term. Reallocations within the EU budget or new political initiatives should not be financed at the expense of running funding programmes.

Strengthening European Territorial Cooperation

BSSSC emphasises that transnational cooperation has been particularly important in the Baltic Sea Region and that this comprehensive policy of territorial cooperation should be further strengthened. This is why the BSSSC stresses that European Territorial Cooperation in the next funding period need to be systematically strengthened and well-resourced. And additionally the former model where cooperation along the external EU border is funded within the cohesion policy framework and under cohesion policy rules should be reinstated.

Participating in cross-border and interregional cooperation provides first-hand experience of the European idea to the citizens. By bringing

together actors from different Member States, third countries and regions to small-scale people-to-people projects, cross-border and interregional cooperation delivers an essential contribution and a clear added value to the Baltic Sea Region and the whole of Europe. European Territorial Cooperation should go beyond the growth and jobs and put stronger focus on fostering good neighbourhood, trust and understanding between nations and citizens in Europe.

Support of macro-regional strategies

BSSSC highlights the fact that macro-regional strategies gather stakeholders and actors from all sectors and levels of governance relevant for regional development in the respective macro-regions. Furthermore, macro-regional strategies help to improve and strengthen cooperation structure, thus contributing to regional and European integration.

BSSSC stresses that macro-regional strategies depend on good access to European funding opportunities. Better coherence between strategies and programmes is essential for the success of strategies such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

BSSSC underlines that macro-regional strategies offer useful instruments to improve relations between EU Member States and neighbouring countries and thereby support European Neighbourhood Policy. The BSSSC again regrets the non-involvement of Norway in Russia in the EUSBSR and calls for the resumption of the dialogue between the EU and Russia on topics of common interest.

Strategic and result oriented programming and implementation

BSSSC is convinced that in the future EU cohesion policy needs to focus further on a result-oriented approach. As a precondition, regional actors responsible for programming and implementation of programmes must be allowed to adapt EU-priorities suitable for their specific areas to reach common EU objectives. BSSSC opposes minimum thresholds for financial instruments imposed by the EU regulations.

BSSSC encourages the continuation of smart specialisation in the next funding period. The concept of smart specialisation has proven to be successful in fostering innovation by strengthening the competitiveness and growth potential of the regions.

In order to use EU-funding efficiently it is crucial to further improve synergies between the different European Structural and Investment Funds and also other funding programmes. The existing differences in rules of funding programmes and framework logic prevent member states and regions for using opportunities to combine different funding sources in a smart way. BSSSC is convinced that programming for the new funding period needs to be designed to become a clearly structured, lean and partnership-based process between European Commission, the member states and regions. The final result of this process should be an agreement on strategic objectives rather than an operational programme describing detailed measures and technical procedures.

Cutting red-tape

BSSSC believes that the principle of proportionality and the ability to deliver results should be better taken into account in the context of implementation and control of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). ESIF has become a subject of severe over-regulation.

The ever growing a complexity of programme execution has led to a negative development. The complexity increases the likelihood and frequency of errors and the fear of errors and their negative financial and political consequences has led to stagnation in many regions. The atmosphere of insecurity, fear and distrust paralyses creativity and innovation in regional and national administrators and beneficiaries. All this contributes to diminishing the positive effects of ESIF, which dues to the high visibility of the policy is likely to harm the image and reputation of the EU.

BSSSC is convinced that it is of utmost important to proceed to a comprehensive and radical revision and reduction of the requirements imposed on the ESIF management by the European level to safeguard cohesion policy and its significant added value to the European project. The approach to programme planning and implementation needs to be fundamentally changed based on the principle of subsidiarity. That should comprise the option for member states and regions to decide that the administrative implementation of their programmes should be governed by national law.

Concerning state aid regime, BSSSC demands a further simplification of rules for the implementation of ESIF. BSSSC calls on introduction of a block exemption from state aid regime for all ESIF. Furthermore BSSSC deems it imperative to adopt a consistent single audit approach in order to avoid the duplication of audits, to exclude contradictions between control organs and to reduce the cost of auditing.

BSSSC Outlook - Norwegian Chairmanship of BSSSC 2017 – 2018

By the BSSSC Secretariat in the Eastern Norway Country Network

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. Today in the BSR we face a difficult political landscape with challenges such as; citizens lack of trust in the political system, refugee crisis, reintroduction and intensification of border controls, EU-Russia relations, weak economic growth, extremism and xenophobia. To address these challenges we have to work together. Bottom-up cooperation involving local and regional level is therefore more important than ever.

In these challenging times, Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN) takes over the Chairmanship and Secretariat of BSSSC for the next two years - 2017 and 2018. This is the second time Eastern Norway County Network chairs the BSSSC. Last time was 2006 - 2008 with Mr. Arne Ören as Chair. The new Chairman will be Mr. Roger Ryberg, chair of the Regional Cooperation Board of Eastern Norway County Network and the County Mayor of Buskerud. The BSSSC Secretariat will be connected to the ENCN secretariat in Oslo and the eight counties in Eastern Norway will support the work of the Chairmanship.



Photograph: Tuula Palaste

The ENCN Chairmanship of BSSSC will put strong focus on information and communication. Among others, a new BSSSC web page will be opened to strengthen both internal and external communication. In addition, BSSSC newsletters will be reinstalled and databases upgraded.

ENCN Chairmanship of BSSSC will continue the focus on dialogue and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures in the Baltic Sea area. Actions will also be taken to renew the cooperation perspective with Committee of the Regions (CoR) as well as to continue the dialog with European institutions and networks in Brussels.

In the BSSSC Work Plan 2017 - 2018 BSSSC will continue to cooperate closely with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and strive for better involvement of local and regional authorities and young people in the implementation. Eastern Norway County Network is partner in a newly started Interreg BSR project - to better communicate the EUSBSR - "Let's Communicate!" and ENCN hope make use of this project also for the BSSSC work - to create synergies.

The future of Cohesion Policy in EU post 2020 - and particularly future of European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) - will be an area of concern and on the top of the BSSSC agenda in 2017. Involvement of youth and support to the BSSSC youth network will be a priority of the new Chairmanship.

ENCN will continue the good work of the Helsinki-Uusimaa Chairmanship and further develop the BSSSC political network - keeping regions involved and active in BSSSC as well as attracting the interest of new regions. The policy areas for 2017 - 2018 will be:

- Sustainable development and climate change - Baltic 2030
- Transport and accessibility – transport corridors
- Culture, creative industries and regional identity

- Growth, jobs and innovation - smart specialisation (bio-economy, blue growth, and digital agenda)

In addition, Helsinki-Uusimaa region will continue as Rapporteur on Maritime Policy in the Board.

BSSSC will implement its work plan among others through involvement - as an associated partner - in some important Interreg BSR projects. This is part of BSSSCs ambitions to be a platform for project development, partner search and dissemination of project results and a networking arena for exchange of best practices and governance models.

We look forward to two challenging years of BSSSC Chairmanship and Baltic Sea Region cooperation.



BSSSC Secretariat in Eastern Norway County Network. From left to right: Jan Edøy (Brussels Antenna), Hilde Beate Aarø (Special Adviser), Lars Fredrik Lund Godbolt (Executive Secretary), Roger Ryberg (BSSSC Chair), Ann Irene Sæternes (Secretary-General)

Greetings from the Next BSSSC Chair

By Roger Ryberg (BSSSC Chair 2016-2017)

Dear BSSSC friends,

I look forward to chair BSSSC over the next 2-years, and I can assure you that Eastern Norway County Network will continue the good work of BSSSC.

As new Chair, I will like to put strong focus on information and communication to make BSSSC visible and recognised. Dialogue and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures, as well as keeping regions involved and active in BSSSC, will be a key issue.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is an important framework, and BSSSC will be one of the links connecting the strategy to regional and local authorities. Cohesion Policy post 2020 - and particularly the future of Interreg - will be another important area of our concern.

Youth involvement will continue to be a focus area, and BSSSC will under my chairmanship continue as a platform for young people - strengthening youth participation in all our policy work. In this respect, we will work together with UBC and EuroRegion Baltic.

About the Writers

Ossi Savolainen

Regional Mayor, Helsinki-Uusimaa

Savolainen was the chair of the BSSSC 2013-2016. For over two decades he has been a manager of the health care and social welfare services in several cities and municipalities in different parts of Finland. Before joining the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council he was the Mayor of the City of Hyvinkää.



Ann Irene Sæternes

Coordinator of International Affairs, Eastern Norway County Network, BSSSC Secretary-General 2017-2018

Ann Irene Sæternes is the BSSSC Secretary-General for the years 2017-2018. She already held the position in 2006-2008. Sæternes has worked with international affairs in the Eastern Norway County Network since 1999.



Jon Halvard Eide

International Coordinator Vest-Agder County Council

Jon Halvard Eide is a Political Scientist from the University of Oslo and International Director of Vest-Agder County Council. Throughout his professional career he has been the Transport Adviser of the CPMR North Sea Commission since 2001, and participating in several transport projects in the Baltic Sea Region, North Sea and Europe. Since 2013, he is the rapporteur on transport in the board of the BSSSC. He is also member of the Norwegian National Sub-Committee on Interreg, and a National Contact Point for Interreg Eurone.



Stefan Musiolik

Head of Unit, Baltic Sea Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Culture and European Affairs, Land Schleswig-Holstein

Since 2004 Stefan Musiolik has been a member of the Board of BSSSC. Since summer 2013 he has acted as a rapporteur for the policy field Culture and Creative Sectors within BSSSC. Together with the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Schleswig-Holstein is co-coordinator for the Policy Area Culture and Creative Sectors of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region since February 2013.



Malgorzata Ludwiczek

Director of the Secretariat for Youth, Westpomeranian Region

Małgorzata Ludwiczek, is the Coordinator for Youth Affairs for the BSSSC. She has worked for with BSSSC Youth for over 10 years. In the BSSSC she represents the Westpomeranian Region, which as the only one in Poland, since 2005, has a Secretariat for youth affairs devoted to the youth policy of the Region. Ms Ludwiczek has been a director of this office since its inception. She is a certified trainer for social skills and an ICF coach.



Bernd Hemingway

Deputy Director General of the CBSS Secretariat

Earlier Mr. Hemingway has worked in the IOM in Geneva and Brussels. Before joining IOM he worked in various positions in the European Commission.



Roger Ryberg

Mayor of Buskerud County, BSSSC Chair 2017-2018

Roger Ryberg is the BSSSC Chair for the years 2017-2018. Ryberg is a teacher by profession and before becoming the mayor of Buskerud County he was an elected member of the Hurum Municipal Council (1983-1995) and a member of Buskerud County Council since 1983.



BSSSC Secretariat

The secretariat follows the Chairperson on a rotating basis. The secretariat supports the Chairperson and the Board and is responsible for the daily administration of the organisation. The secretariat works in accordance with the work plan adopted by the Board. The secretariat prepares the Board meetings, publishes the BSSSC Newsletter and keeps the BSSSC website updated. In 2013-2016 the secretariat was located in Helsinki with the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council and from 2017 onwards the Secretariat will be in Oslo with the Eastern Norway County Network.

