



BSSSC Annual Conference Resolution 2015

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network for decentralised authorities (subregions) in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Once again the BSSSC Annual Conference has invited many policy formulating organisations such as the Council of the Baltic Sea (CBSS), Baltic Development Forum (BDF), Baltic Islands Network (B7), Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) Baltic Sea Commission, Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Euro Region Baltic (ERB) and the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA) to discuss the future of the region. The BSSSC and the CBSS Chairmanship have agreed to intensify the cooperation between Baltic Sea organisations in order to discuss joint strategies and to better use limited resources.

With regard to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

The EUSBSR constitutes an important strategic and institutional framework for the BSR cooperation. The overall success of the strategy depends on the weight and attention it is given from political actors at all levels of government.

BSSSC underlines that multi-level governance is the key factor in facilitating the involvement of regional and local authorities in the implementation of the Strategy.

BSSSC welcomes the new EUSBSR Action Plan endorsed at the 6th Annual Forum in Jurmala 15 – 16 June and the fact that organisations representing local and regional level are mentioned as part of the governance of the strategy.

BSSSC nevertheless calls on the member states to allow for broader involvement of the regions in the implementation structures of the Action Plan, e.g. in Steering Groups and flagship projects. Regional, local as well as non-governmental actors around the Baltic Sea possess useful knowledge and experience in many areas, and can constructively contribute to the success of the Strategy and its Action Plan.

With regard to the Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with Russia

BSSSC appreciates the invitation from the ND Steering Group to involve the sub-regional level in the Northern Dimension and offers itself to act as a platform for information exchange between ND structures and sub-regional actors in the BSR.

BSSSC recognizes the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Russia on local and regional level despite the problematic political situation. BSSSC urges 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.



With regard to Climate change and the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 21)

Climate change constitutes one of the most important challenges of our society today and a broad, balanced and durable international climate agreement during COP21 in Paris is needed. The BSR is highly vulnerable to climate change and the capacities of all stakeholders must be used to design effective policies on mitigation and adaptation through a bottom-up and multi-sector approach.

BSSSC urges the national governments and the EU to significantly increase their efforts to agree on an ambitious and binding climate change agreement at the UN world climate summit in Paris in the autumn of 2015 (COP21).

Regions are directly affected by climate change and regional authorities are also close to the various sources of greenhouse gas emissions. The BSSSC therefore welcomes the launch of the EU Energy Union as a coherent framework for addressing these challenges. BSSSC calls on regional and local authorities of the BSR to promote and implement innovative and effective policies to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon society as well as to support green and resource efficient technologies, knowledge exchange and social innovation.

BSSSC calls for closer co-operation between BSR organisations to address the issues of climate change and sustainable energy and is encouraging the actors of the Horizontal Action Climate and the Policy Area Energy of the EUSBSR to take the lead.

With regard to youth involvement

The BSSSC youth team is a platform of exchange and cooperation between youth representatives and politicians of the BSSSC regions, based on principles such as tolerance, democracy and solidarity.

The BSSSC welcomes and actively supports the initiative of the CBSS to invite BSR stakeholders on youth cooperation to a Round Table discussion in the autumn of 2015 with the aim of better coordinating activities in this field.

BSSSC encourages all BSR regions to include a youth dimension in all their sectoral policies and to fully exploit the possibilities offered by European funding programmes.

BSSSC reaffirms the [BSSSC Declaration on Youth Participation from 17.09.2012](#) and urges the municipalities and regions in the Baltic Sea Region to implement an active youth involvement policy.



With regard to the digital agenda and the regions in the Baltic Sea area

The BSSSC welcomes the launch of the Digital Agenda (DA), and will use its network to mobilise the regions around the Baltic Sea to make full use of relevant funding opportunities in support of sustainable development and competitiveness.

The member states and Managing Authorities of Structural Funds Programmes are requested to use these programmes to address the uneven distribution of infrastructure and variable performance on core DA indicators in the BSR.

Fostering Economic Growth and Access to Culture through Digital Technologies

- a.) The BSSSC underlines the contribution of cultural and creative sectors (CCS) to economic growth and employment in the BSR and the opportunities the CCS, also and especially combined with digital technologies, offer for youth employment.
- b.) The BSSSC calls on the decision-makers of the region to support cooperation projects in the BSR - bringing together CCS experts and enterprises from the whole region in order to pool know-how, exchange experiences and to bundle resources e.g. for joint marketing initiatives.
- c.) The BSSSC encourages regional and national authorities to promote the development of instruments to support the CCS to become competitive and to support their internationalization.
- d.) The BSSSC supports projects developing innovative approaches and gathering cultural and other socio-economic sectors by using digital media, such as game-based learning tools, audiovisual aids and applications in the health sector or digital services applied to cultural heritage and museum's presentations.

Digital evolution – youth, education and digital agenda

- a.) The BSSSC recognizes the importance of education in fostering digital skills, creating jobs and boosting competitiveness and innovation.
- b.) The BSSSC believes that youth learning offers tremendous opportunities to use digital media and digital tools to support science and lifelong learning skills.
- c.) The BSSSC is urging national authorities and regions to focus on digital literacy as a basic competence in all subjects at all levels of education.



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. ITS is thus 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.

Smart Specialisation and Blue Growth

- a.) Recent studies show that the maritime economy has a huge potential, including in the Baltic Sea. Short sea shipping, coastal and cruise tourism, offshore wind, shipbuilding, aquaculture and blue biotechnologies are the most promising sectors of the Baltic Sea region's maritime economy. In this context BSSSC acknowledges the importance of mobilising funding for further investments in the maritime economy.
- b.) The BSSSC encourages regional and national authorities to promote the development of instruments to support the SME:s in the maritime industries to become more competitive and to support their internationalization. The cohesion policy is a relevant instrument for improving the BSR competitiveness in the maritime field, and regional smart-specialisation strategies can be a source of inspiration for EU policy-makers.
- c.) The BSSSC calls on the decision-makers of the EU to support cooperation projects in the maritime field in the BSR - bringing together regional authorities and enterprises from the whole region in order to pool know-how, exchange experiences and to bundle resources that can be beneficial to growth in the Baltic Sea Region.

BSSSC Annual Conference 2016

The next BSSSC Annual Conference will be organized in Finland in autumn 2016.